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"WILL YOU LET ME DISTURB YOU FOR FIVE MINUTES LONGER?"

Heart to Heart; or, Fair Phyllis' Love.

BY ARABELLA SOUTHWORTH.

CHAPTER I.

FAIR PHYLLIS HERSELF.

SHE sat in an old-fashioned chamber all hung with tapestry, and the furniture of which was carved oak; sat, and looked out on the dim, fairy-like landscape and up at the glittering stars, this fair Phyllis of whom I write.

Very different is the lofty, imposing apartment she now occupies to the fresh and tiny bedchamber allotted to her use in her father, Colonel Bruce's house. An old officer (now retired from active service), of good standing indeed, but by no means overburdened with this world's wealth,



"GRAHAM HIMSELF STOOD BEFORE HER."

he could give comforts, but few luxuries, to Phyllis and to her five brothers and sisters. Why, it had even been seriously discussed between Colonel and Mrs. Bruce whether they ought to let their beautiful daughter accept an often-repeated invitation to stay a week with Mrs. Bruce's old friend, Lady Lorton. "There is the dress to consider—it is not merely the journey, and fees to the servants," remarked Phyllis's mother.

"On the other hand, if we do not strain a point now and then, the child's youth will go by without the enjoyment of a single dance," replied the colonel.

Mrs. Bruce was silenced, and cheerfully drew from the remains of her own once ample wardrobe certain dainty India muslins and silken robes, which, with judicious remodeling, sent Phyllis off to Lady Lorton's with most becoming changes of toilet. She need not feel ill-dressed now; and if it were true that the pearl ornaments she wore were her mother's, not her own, that did not make the fair girl look less charming in them.

Forgive her until you know more of the attendant circumstances, that instead of seeking repose after the gay dance at Lady Lorton's, she sits

musings (a happy smile on her young face), musing on the occurrences on the evening; or, if I must speak out honestly, of some one whom she had only seen twice before—some her one, too, whom it is very unwise for to muse on.

For he is Graham, the young Earl of Wavebourne, the only son of a proud marquis, and he lives and moves in a world of fashion and grandeur with which our fair Phyllis has nothing to do. After to-night it is barely possible that they should meet again; he will be off to the Scottish moors, or to his father's castle in Ireland, or abroad, and then to Morleyvale, where his mother, the Marchioness De Vayle, will take care to assemble the gayest possible party. And then will come round the London season, where the handsome young nobleman who has danced with Phyllis to-night, and who has smiled and said things softly, will be surrounded with all the beauty and fashion of London, by whom his smiles will be eagerly coveted, and high-born beauties will be ready to court his attention.

How unwise, then, of our gentle Phyllis to gaze up at the stars and let her thoughts follow him! Does she not know that he is, and must be, far removed from her and hers?

But she still dreams on. She has taken off the soft, white ball-dress in which she looked so lovely to-night, and has removed the cream-colored roses from her rippling golden-brown tresses, and now, attired in a blue dressing-gown, her long hair fallen loose on her shoulders, she permits herself to enjoy over again in thought the past evening.

Out of her quiet country home (a refined one, it is true, but a simple one), where she herself does much to make her father's limited income go further than it would otherwise do, she had come on this gay visit to Lady Lorton's.

She had dropped suddenly into a world where ease, luxury and gayety reigned supreme. Lady Lorton had driven down to the station to meet her on her arrival, welcoming her almost with affection.

"Your mother and I were always dear friends, so you must feel quite at home with me, my dear, and be assured that I am delighted to have you. Our dance here is fixed for to-morrow evening, and there is a large ball to come off in a day or two in the neighborhood at Lady Cleugh's, followed by theatricals here. And we have a picnic in view, and a boating excursion. Here we are at home; you can see Lorton Hall through the trees, and there are my girls waiting to welcome you."

Another twenty-four hours, and Phyllis had made acquaintance with the beautiful pleasure-grounds, and with the cheerful household of Lorton Court; and Lady Lorton's daughters had made friends with her, shown her their dresses for this ball, and told her the names of the chief guests expected for it.

"Our house will be quite full," remarked Janet, the eldest girl. "Mamma says there will not be a spare bed. I wonder if you know any of the people who are coming. Do you know the Thornes or the Clarksons?"

Phyllis had to confess that she was not acquainted with either.

"Young Lord Wavebourne is coming over," continued Janet, "and I am very glad, for he dances beautifully! Have you met him?"

Phyllis blushed, and was conscious of a quickened beating of her heart as she replied "that she had met him once—no, twice—by chance."

And all through the remaining hours of the day she found herself thinking, "Will he be glad to see me again?"

It was not till evening drew on that she had an opportunity of judging of this; but then the question was settled to her satisfaction.

Phyllis was dressed for the large dinner preceding the ball, and was going leisurely to Janet's room, in order to descend to the saloon with that young lady, when, at a turn in the corridor, she encountered a gentleman—no other than Lord Wavebourne.

He did not wear the cricketing-suit on this occasion in which she had first seen him, but a

faultless ball-room costume, and one choice blossom, by way of a bouquet, was in his button-hole.

Phyllis, too, walking slowly along in her elegant white dress, with the cream-colored roses in her hair, wore a somewhat different appearance to the girl he had once seen in a print robe, at her father's modest dwelling.

She had recognized him immediately, but he did not see who was this lovely girl till she raised her eyes as they met.

"Miss Bruce! This is indeed a pleasure! How delighted I am to meet you here!" said he, in a tone and with a look not to be mistaken. That he was pleased to see her again there could not be a doubt.

"I am staying here for the ball," said Phyllis, with a charming blush.

"Let me beg for the first dance you have disengaged," he hastened to say.

Phyllis was delighted to consent, and then he made due inquiries after Colonel and Mrs. Bruce; after which, with a joyful pulsation at her heart, she sought Janet's room.

The dinner which followed proved one long happiness to Phyllis, who, guileless child that she was, did not perceive that she was rapidly falling in love with the young lord by whose side she was seated.

And he? Oh! he forgot all that the Marquis and Marchioness, his august father and mother, would have wished him to remember, and only felt that the fresh, fair girl at his side was perfectly charming, and that it gave him infinite pleasure to devote himself to her.

Then, next day, came the ball; Lady Lorton's beautiful suit of rooms gayly lighted up and decorated with flowers.

Three times (although bound to dance with the daughters of his hostess and with some other ladies present) did the young Earl of Wavebourne claim Phyllis's hand; and had led her out into the dim, delicious gardens, when not dancing, and had talked much to her of Morleyvale, and told her what the place was like. For the night was warm, and all the doors of the mansion were thrown widely open.

Toward the hour after midnight a grand supper was served, and immediately after the banquet the wide-stretching pleasure-grounds were seen lighted up by Chinese lanterns, and most of the guests promenaded out-of-doors, or sat about in groups, to watch the scene.

Into this magical center Graham drew Phyllis.

"We shall see most of the grounds from here," said he, leading her somewhat apart. "What a delicious evening it is! I never enjoyed a dance so much."

Phyllis made no actual rejoinder, nor is it yet the fashion for young ladies to avow their delight as gentlemen do; but had she expressed her feelings, she could have said, with genuine truth, that she had never experienced such enjoyment. But she only replied, in a low, sweet voice to his further expressions of pleasure, "Yes, the gardens look quite fairy-like. I am fortunate to be one of Lady Lorton's guests to-night, to see it all."

"Nay, it is I who call myself fortunate to-night," responded he, with meaning in his tone. For he, too, disregarding all whispers from Wisdom's voice, was plunging more hopelessly in love every moment.

But when next week came, and he found himself at Morleyvale, would he then think the same rapturous way of fair Phyllis? And if he did, how was it to end? Could there be any other ending, save one—namely, that he must forget her? It is all very well to take immense pleasure in the charming society of a lovely girl, but loveliness alone is not all that is requisite in the bride deemed worthy for the heir to a marquise.

Nothing of this did he remember to-night, as they watched the lines of colored light together in the sweet, dusky garden.

"You will be at lady Cleugh's, I hope?" asked he, in a low tone.

"Oh, yes; Lady Lorton tells me she is to take all her party to Lady Cleugh's ball."

"Then I shall make a point of staying for

it," he rejoined. "My father wants to entice me to Morleyvale for a huge archery meeting, but I shall leave them all to dance and shoot without me."

And Phyllis's young heart beat joyfully at his words. Did he indeed stay because she was there? They had seen each other but twice before this evening, but it would be hard now to think that they might not perhaps ever meet again.

"Do you stay for the theatricals also?" asked he, after a moment of silence.

"Oh, yes; till the end of the week," answered Phyllis, blushing. Fortunately it was dusk where they stood.

"Then I shall manage to stay, too," said he.

And as the young pair were enjoying each other's society under pretense of admiring the Chinese lanterns, a middle-aged gentleman, in a one-horse fly, who was driving along the high road by Lorton Court, was attracted by the sight of the gardens, and put his head out of the window to have a look at them.

"This is Morleyvale, I suppose?" said he to his driver.

"No, no, sir; this be not Morleyvale," was the answer. "Morleyvale's over twelve miles off."

"There is some grand entertainment going on here to-night, I see. Whose place is this?" said the gentleman.

"This be Lorton Court. Oh, yes, sir; 'tis a grand ball they're giving to-night. I heard tell that the old Marquis's son was to be there."

"What is he like, the young lord?"

"Oh! very nice, sir. Most folks like him; and he's as handsome as my lady, his mother. His sisters are beauties like—"

"Drive on now, please," said the gentleman, wearily.

On jogged the fly; the gentleman sunk back with a sigh, and though his eyes watched the lighted gardens seen from the high road, he hardly took in the scene before him. "Handsome, and a nice young man! And he has sisters—beautiful sisters! I pity them all, from my heart!" he ejaculated aloud.

On jogged the vehicle, taking the fly and its occupier away from Lady Lorton's to a modest dwelling on the road to Morleyvale.

"This is a hard thing to be put upon me," muttered the middle-aged gentleman, as he was carried along to his friend's house in the pleasant gloom—"a hard thing! I trust I shall do my duty! Let me see! I am forty-eight this year, and the Marquis cannot really be much more than two or three-and-fifty. I remember it as if it was yesterday! Ah! I was then a young fellow of eighteen, and little thought I should ever be called upon to perform so painful a duty—I, who looked on so carelessly!"

What these cogitations might mean we cannot inquire immediately. We must leave the middle-aged gentleman of forty-eight jogging along in company with his sad thoughts, and Phyllis and Lord Wavebourne strolling about the flower-scented garden, and go back almost a month before our story opens, that it may be understood under what circumstances our youthful pair first met each other.

It will be time enough afterward to improve our acquaintance with the melancholy individual who was jogging on his way toward Morleyvale. How could Phyllis dream, or Graham conjecture, that he carried the issue of their love-dream with him?

CHAPTER II.

A DILEMMA.

"PHYLLIS! shall we be late? How dark it is getting! I am sure a thunder-storm will overtake us!"

"Never mind! I am used to thunder-storms—I who live in the country," laughed she who had been thus addressed.

"But, indeed, there is danger! Surely you read the papers! Surely you know that accidents do occur by lightning—serious ones, too!" said the other girl, in dismayed tones, and a look of distress on her face.

"My dear Ettie, why should you settle beforehand that this particular thunder-storm is going to harm you?" said Phyllis. "Perhaps we may get home before it bursts over us. But don't stand looking at the sky. Come along quickly home!"

"Must we go straight down the road?" asked timid Ettie.

"No, no! If you can climb a stile, we can run through that oakwood to the left of us, and so cut off half a mile."

"But it is so dangerous to go among trees in a thunder-storm," objected Ettie.

"The thunder is only beginning to grumble. We shall be on the other side of the wood before the storm is upon us. I think we may get home before it begins, if you would decide to come at once, Ettie. Pray do, dear, for it is getting late now, and so dusk!"

"In the wood it will be darker than ever!" faltered Ettie, glancing with alarm at the sky.

For answer, Phyllis ("Fair Phyllis," as she was called by her companions) took Ettie's hand, and drew her to the entrance of the wood, to which a high and rustic stile gave egress.

Although the season was summer, evening and the coming storm made a dark gloom under the oak-boughs. "What a lonely place!" exclaimed Ettie, shrinking back. "Perhaps it will be better, after all, to go by the road."

But Phyllis had already vaulted lightly over the stile, and now stood, laughing gayly, on the other side, her sweet, girlish mirth floating on the silent air. Ettie (who was on a visit to Phyllis) took courage, and made a rush at the stile—an awkward rush, which resulted in a tumble. Phyllis hastened to her friend's help, but, alas! she could give little under the circumstances. Ettie had sprained her ankle, and was in too much pain to make it possible for her to walk home.

"I must go for assistance," said Phyllis, in much concern.

"And leave me here, alone, in the dark, and with the storm coming! I could not bear it!" cried Ettie, bursting into tears of uncontrollable distress.

Phyllis was seriously distressed also, but was not accustomed to look to tears for relief.

"There is only one thing to do, dear Ettie," said she, resolutely, "for you cannot walk home, and we cannot stay all night in this wood. I must run to that farm-house we can just see beyond those fields, and the people there will bring a vehicle of some sort. I will be so quick! And you know I can run fast, Ettie!"

"I shall die of terror if you leave me! Phyllis, you know I am helpless! I cannot move!" cried Ettie, clinging to her friend.

Phyllis was sorely puzzled what to do. To leave the timid Ettie seemed cruel; to remain there all night, impossible.

"Somebody may come by!" wept Ettie.

"Yes; but if nobody comes, dear?" asked Phyllis.

To this question, Ettie only replied by still more bitter tears. In the silence, the wind, awakened by the approaching storm, rushed wildly through the boughs overhead, and increased Ettie's terror. The thunder, yet distant, growled ominously, foretelling what was to come, and round the two girls darkness was creeping.

"If you could make up your mind to be brave for a few minutes, dear Ettie, I would soon bring help. I would run all the way," urged Phyllis once more, for their position had become truly embarrassing. With Ettie in her present mood, what could be done?

At this moment, there was a sound as of the crashing of the undergrowth in the wood, the brushwood parted, and a huge dog, almost as big as a lion, bounded toward the spot where the two girls stood. He paused in his onward rush when he came near to Phyllis and her companion, then bounded over the stile, and stood awaiting his master.

"What an immense creature! Oh, Phyllis, how he frightened me!" exclaimed Ettie.

"He inspires me with hope," answered Phyllis; "for some one must surely be with him, and will bring us help. I will call!"

But before she could do so, a whistle disturbed the stillness which was now very mournful, and then a man's footstep was heard.

"Hector, come back!" said some one, in resolute accents.

The dog bounded back far more quickly than he had come in sight; the footsteps turned in another direction.

"Whoever it is, he is going away from us by the other path! I must run after the dog, and beg his owner to get help for us!"

And suiting the action to the word, Phyllis left her friend supported against a tree, and ran forward, calling out, "Help, help!"

There was a moment's silence—the dog came running back, and a man's voice called out, "Eh? who calls?"

"I!" said the fair Phyllis, almost running up against a tall athletic young man, sun-burnt, and in a faultless cricketing costume.

He, on his part, was immensely surprised to see a beautiful young lady, in light summer attire, alone at that hour in the wood, with a storm threatening to burst each moment, and where coming night made it so lonely. But he was prompt to offer aid.

"What can I do for you?" said he, with courteous deference, for a moment removing his smart cap of many colors.

"We want to get help; my friend has sprained her ankle. We cannot reach home, and the storm is coming!" said Phyllis, imploringly.

He understood the situation in a moment.

"Which is the nearest house where they will be likely to have a carriage of some sort?" asked he, quickly. "I am a stranger hereabouts, but if you will direct me I am entirely at your service."

Phyllis thanked him gratefully. She directed him how he might reach the farm-house, adding that he had better explain that the desired assistance was for a young lady staying at Colonel Bruce's.

"I will bring you some sort of vehicle as quickly as possible—of that be assured," said the gentleman. "Would you like my dog to stay with you till my return? He is a good guard."

"Hector stay here, good dog!" added he, indicating to that intelligent animal what he required of him; and an instant afterward the two girls found themselves alone with their new and formidable protector.

"Oh, Phyllis, how glad I am!" said Ettie, when the footsteps of Hector's master had died away.

"Glad!" cried Phyllis; "I should think so! We were like the babes in the wood, only I very much question whether we should have got any little birds to bring us leaves as a covering. My comfort is, however, that my father and mother will certainly suppose we have remained at Mr. Camlyn's, and not have time to be really anxious before we appear."

In a marvelously short space of time voices sounded not far off; the rumbling of wheels was heard, Hector jumped up in grave excitement, and then their unknown friend reappeared. He vaulted over the stile, and hastened to the side of the benighted girls.

"I hope I have not seemed too long! Mr. James, the farmer, very kindly got his only pony-carriage ready immediately. He is now with it in the road. Let me help to seat you in it."

"Thank you very much for your great kindness," exclaimed the girls in chorus.

Poor Ettie winced under the necessity of moving, but supported by the strong arm of the athletic stranger she reached to the old pony-carriage, a ramshackle vehicle, in which there was room only for the driver and one person besides.

By this time the thunder rumbled frequently and threateningly, and swift lightning shot

athwart the sky. Phyllis knew that Ettie was in mortal terror.

"Please drive quickly to escape the storm!" said she to the farmer.

"And you, miss?" asked he.

"I—I will come very quickly after you," said Phyllis. "Pray go on!"

"But 'tis so lonesome," remarked the farmer, shaking the reins.

"Of course I hope you will allow me to see you safe to Colonel Bruce's gates," said the gentleman in the cricketing suit. "I am staying at Lord Merham's place, and my name is Wavebourne."

He had hardly ended his sentence when the farmer drove on, and Phyllis found herself alone with the courteous stranger.

"Indeed, you are too kind! But it will surely be taking you out of your way?" responded Phyllis.

"That signifies nothing. I think the storm will not do us much harm, after all!"

They hastened on in the gathering darkness, and long before they reached Colonel Bruce's residence, the lightning was blinding, the thunder continuous.

"You will just escape the worst, I hope," said the gentleman, anxiously, as the rain came pouring down.

"Yes; I am at home now. You will let us try to make what amends we can for having hindered you so? Papa will drive you to Lord Merham's when the storm is over."

"I should be sorry indeed to give so much trouble," returned he; "but if you will shelter me for a little while, shall thankfully accept your hospitality."

By this time they had reached the house, where Ettie and the farmer were already housed.

Colonel Bruce came out in haste and some anxiety to welcome his daughter and her companion.

The Colonel was tall, of dignified and soldierly bearing, a little stern of aspect; but this suited his erect figure and handsome face.

"How can we thank you, sir?" began he. "Do let us offer you a bed to-night, for I hear from my daughter's friend that you are staying at Lord Merham's, which is ten miles off and this storm will not soon be over."

"I hope I need not be so troublesome, and am sincerely glad to have been of use to Miss Bruce and her friend," returned the stranger, frankly.

"We can give you some dinner, at any rate," said Mrs. Bruce, coming forward courteously, after she had hastily whispered to Phyllis to make haste to remove her wet garments.

Then Colonel Bruce took their visitor to his own room, and scarcely half an hour afterward a small party assembled in the modest dining-room—to wit, the Colonel and his wife, Phyllis and the stranger.

Ettie's ankle had been bathed, and she was now reclining on the sofa in Mrs. Bruce's dressing-room, where she must perforce dine alone for to-night; but she was now at ease, and so rejoiced to find herself safely housed, that she forgot her past terrors and discomforts.

"Mrs. Bruce," said young Wavebourne, addressing that lady, "it is I who should think myself fortunate in having encountered your daughter and her friend, otherwise I should have been walking, shelterless, toward Merham Court at this moment, and the rain is coming down in torrents!"

"Would you have walked so far at this time of night?" asked Mrs. Bruce.

"I mean to do so yet," replied he, "when the storm blows over a little."

But the storm gave no sign of any intention to blow over. The windows rattled, the branches of the old trees in the Colonel's garden swayed and creaked, as if it had been November instead of August.

Meantime Phyllis had come quietly into the drawing-room. She had changed her wet dress for a simple thick white one, made high to the throat, with lace frills; but never had

the young man, who had become their unexpected guest, thought any garment so becoming, and he had had ample opportunity, in the course of his twenty-four summers, to make mental comments on court robes as well as on simpler ones.

It was past eight o'clock when the little party assembled in Mrs. Bruce's dining-room; and long before the meal was over, young Wavebourne devoutly wished the storm would rage on, thereby permitting him an excuse for accepting the Colonel's offered hospitality for the night.

If he did so, would he not see again the charming girl seated on the other side of the table?

"Phyllis, my dear, have some more mutton?" said her father.

So her name was Phyllis! How appropriate! How well it suited her!

The young man had seldom, if ever before, found himself seated at such a modest repast; but never had he better enjoyed a meal. His exertions at a cricket match that day (a match ended later than he had counted on), and his half-dozen miles' walk since, had given him appetite sufficient; but it was the charm of fair Phyllis's presence which made the banquet, to him, so delectable.

A neatly dressed parlor-maid waited at dinner, and the simple meal consisted only of soup, roast mutton, and fruit tart, followed by a dessert from the Colonel's own garden.

A vase of flowers, tastefully arranged by the hands of the fair Phyllis herself, stood in the center of the table; and involuntarily Wavebourne contrasted this simple elegance with the luxury he had seen displayed in his father's house, and in the house of his friends and acquaintances, every day of his life.

The dessert was still on the table when a laugh and a boy's voice was followed by the entrance of one of Phyllis's school-boy brothers, with a young sister of that fair damsel.

The guest at once attempted to make friends with the boy, and not unsuccessfully. The latter's chief aim in life, at present, was to become an expert cricketer, so they fraternized at once.

"I mean to play a good deal at school this autumn. I am to go to school in a week," said the boy, confidentially, at the end of the first five minutes.

"And to what academy are you to go?" asked young Wavebourne.

"To Doctor Crawley's, at Hillside," said the boy.

"Doctor Crawley's!" exclaimed their new acquaintance. "What! near Morleyvale?"

"Yes; he lives two miles from Morleyvale, a great place belonging to the Marquis De Vayle."

"Very good! Then you shall do something besides play cricket all the autumn, for you will come over and visit me, I hope? My father will be very glad to see you, and we know Doctor Crawley quite well."

"Oh, thank you!" returned Bertie Bruce, delighted, but not in the least enlightened as to who his new acquaintance was. "But how shall I see you? Where do you live?"

"At Morleyvale," was the answer.

And not till that moment did any of them recognize that they were speaking to the young heir of the proud Marquis, whose ample possessions were a constant theme of conversation in the neighborhood.

Colonel Bruce smiled as he remarked, "Pardon a blunder on our part. I think we have all been mistaking your lordship for a cousin of yours, Mr. Wavebourne, of Combe-hill Park. It is very kind of you to ask my boy to go and see Morleyvale."

I think that, even at this early stage of their acquaintance, Phyllis experienced a sort of pang when she found that the handsome young fellow who had come to their assistance in the wood was separated from her by all the titles and dignities inseparable from the heir of Lord De Vayle. Had he been plain Mr. Wavebourne, he would have been more on her own level.

But Phyllis, though she suddenly felt that he lived in a world removed from hers, did not by any means reason consciously in this manner.

They rose from the table, and went up to see Ettie, who was tired, and wished to go to bed. When she re-entered the drawing-room a few minutes later, Lord Wavebourne was chatting to her mother, and Bertie was listening.

The young girl took her embroidery, and sat down in silence—a silence his lordship soon interrupted.

"You sing, Miss Bruce, I am sure?" said he, glancing at the open piano where some music was scattered about.

"Yes," she said, with a smile; "but it is my mother we like to listen to."

Then, naturally, he asked Mrs. Bruce if he might venture to beg her to sing something; and she, replying that she would do so with pleasure, provided her husband would consent to join her in a duet, the evening terminated with an improvised concert. For all the Bruces were gifted with fine voices; and after the Colonel and his wife had sung two or three times, Phyllis took her turn, and then it was found that Lord Wavebourne could also bear his part creditably in the entertainment; and Phyllis forgot entirely that he was the Earl of Wavebourne, or that he had anything to do with Morleyvale, he was so charming, so unassuming, and so clever.

And when the little party separated for the night, and Phyllis was alone in her tiny chamber, her thoughts still dwelt on the incidents of the evening. She did not ask herself why it had passed so pleasantly. She was only conscious that it had been very pleasant indeed.

What an unlooked-for termination to their misadventure in the wood! Again she saw herself running forward, calling "Help!" and the great, brown, majestic head of Hector reappearing.

Hector! The remembrance of him made her start up. Had cook left the dog any water? Had she given him a mat to sleep on in the kitchen, where, it had been arranged, he was to pass the night?

She would run down-stairs softly and see, for she had not yet been ten minutes in her room; and even if cook was gone to bed, her father would probably be below, for he always was late.

So, with light footfall, Phyllis tripped down-stairs. Tick-tock, tick-tock, tick, tick, tick, tick-tock went the great clock in the hall. No other sound broke the stillness.

Miss Bruce sped on through a swing-door, and was soon in the kitchen. Hector, who seemed to understand that he was in this strange place on an unexpected visit, looked up at the young girl with his large, intelligent eyes as she entered.

When she approached him, saying, "Good Hector, have they left you no water to drink—nothing to sleep on?" he rose and wagged his fine tail gratefully. And when she hastened to bring a basin of water, and fetched a soft mat from the passage, Hector wagged his tail much more, for he had a fine feeling as well as a fine tail.

"And now you shall have a biscuit or two, good dog," said Phyllis; and in a huge cupboard found what she wanted.

Now, just as she was in the act of giving Hector the third biscuit, and was about to bid him a friendly good-night, voices smote her ear—those of her father and their visitor.

"This way, then. I know your dog has been placed in the kitchen," said her father. "If your lordship won't mind coming there, you'll see him."

And then Lord Wavebourne made answer, "If you'll let me go there I shall be much obliged, as I always bid my dog good-night."

"Here we are! Oh, one of the servants," still up, I hear!"

But it was not "one of the servants;" it was Phyllis, as we have seen.

"Papa," said she, coming forward with a

blush, "I was sure cook would not leave water for the dog, and so—"

"And so you came yourself to see he had it. How very kind!" interrupted Lord Wavebourne, looking admiringly at Miss Bruce.

Her father laughed.

"My daughter has a weakness for all animals. I might have known your dog would not be forgotten. Good-night, my dear," said he, turning to her; "and get to sleep as quickly as possible, for it is midnight."

"Good-night," said his young lordship, venturing to hold out his hand—venturing, too, a slight pressure on the fair Phyllis's delicate fingers.

And then she disappeared, half vexed to have been discovered, but when she found herself in her room once more, again fell to musing.

The clock in the hall striking the half-hour after midnight roused her, and she started up, saying to herself, "How very silly I am, to be sure!"

Another half-hour, and deepest slumber sealed the eyes of the innocent girl.

CHAPTER III.

THE MORNING AFTER.

THE storm had quite cleared off when morning returned. The roses in Colonel Bruce's garden raised their dewy petals to the sun, the verbenas and geraniums glowed rich in the warm light of day. A thrush was singing at the top of its sweet voice in the old copper beech on the lawn. Lord Wavebourne threw open his window and beheld the smiling scene.

He beheld something else, too—a group of happy children out of doors before breakfast chasing each other round the neatly-kept garden walks. Next he heard some words which attracted his attention, and caused him to continue his gaze from the window.

"Phyllis, come out! We want you, Phyllis!"

"Hush!" said a sweet voice in response. "I am coming."

His lordship now watched with still more interest the little group in the flower-garden.

A moment or two later Phyllis herself joined them. She wore a fresh print robe, looped up daintily. No ornaments of any kind. Nothing could be more simple than her attire; and yet how enchantingly beautiful she was! The children rushed to meet her, and she stooped to kiss her little sisters.

As he watched, unseen, other thoughts than those of admiration of her beauty came into the young lord's mind. There rose before him the picture of another girl of Phyllis's age—a girl who had every adjunct which wealth could bestow; but she had never looked as *this* girl looked, in her print dress, in the morning sunshine.

Why did he compare them now? Why? Because he was fully aware that he was expected by his father and his own family to select that other girl as his bride, as she had all the acquirements a girl should have who allies herself with the heir to a marquise.

He looked once more at Phyllis's print robe, and remembered the elaborate toilet which the favored heiress would wear should *she* be staying under the same roof with him, and was ungrateful enough to prefer the print dress to the elaborate one.

"Lady Laura is not accustomed to be out of doors at this hour," was his next mental comment; after which it rushed into his mind that probably the breakfast hour in Mrs. Bruce's house was considerably earlier than the breakfast hour at Morleyvale, and completed his toilet in all haste.

Hector, meantime, had made himself much at home with the children of his host, and was now sedately carrying in his great mouth little Alick's straw hat, to the immediate delight of that small child of five years old.

And now Lord Wavebourne hastened to join the group in the garden—the group in the midst of which stood Phyllis.

She smiled as she bowed her morning greet-

ing, unembarrassed, and, oh! how fair! Lady Laura, who was styled a beauty, had never looked so lovely.

"My dog will want to stay here," said his lordship.

"Yes; leave him—oh, do leave him!" cried little Alick. "Phyllis will take care of him—won't you, Phyllis?"

"Hector would not really like to stay with us, Alick," smiled she. "Of course, he loves his home best."

"I don't think he cares for Morleyvale particularly," replied Hector's master. "He has no young companions there; and when I go off on visits or abroad, I suspect Hector is dull."

"Oh, then," cried the children, in chorus, "send him to us when you're away! We won't let him get dull; we'll play with him all day long!"

"Happy Hector! I wish I really could accept for him your kind offer. He would be a very fortunate dog. But that can't be, alas! And you'd get tired of him, perhaps. Who'd feed him?"

"Phyllis!" cried little Alick, seizing her hand. "Phyllis always does everything for us."

She laughed as the young man glanced at her with increasing admiration.

"I'm going in to breakfast," said Phyllis, "for I see mamma beckoning me from the dining-room. But may I give Hector some first, as I suspect he is quite ready for food?"

"Hector and I are both equally obliged for such kindness," replied his lordship.

"Come, Hector!" cried Phyllis.

"We'll all come to see him fed!" cried the delighted children.

"Let me petition to come also," pleaded his lordship.

"But we are going round through the kitchen into the back yard," said Phyllis, a little embarrassed.

"You are aware that I have already made acquaintance with the kitchen," smiled his lordship. "Do you give me permission to follow you?"

And thus it happened that the heir of all the vast property called the Morleyvale estate followed Phyllis into the kitchen, much to cook's consternation, since that worthy domestic was just broiling some ham for the family breakfast.

On through the kitchen to the back yard went his lordship, the delighted children, and the noble Hector.

Phyllis disappeared for a moment to fetch a porringer of milk, some biscuits, bread and a nice bone.

Ah! how unconscious was Phyllis, as she stooped to offer the fare to Hector, that Hector's master was asking himself for the first time, "Why should I be expected to marry Lady Laura?"

And what possible connection could there be between this question and the sight of Phyllis giving Hector his breakfast?

Renewed entreaties from little Alick, "That he would let them take care of Hector next time he went away," roused his lordship to the business of the moment.

"Do you know how far off I and Hector live?" asked he. "We live thirty miles away, at least. Now, how could I send so far every time I went away?"

"Phyllis could fetch him," pleaded the little boy.

But here Phyllis decided that they must themselves go to breakfast, and Alick's importunities concerning Hector were interrupted.

As they entered the small breakfast-room, made cheerful by smiling faces, fresh flowers, and a simple meal daintily laid out, Phyllis repressed a sigh. She was thinking that it was a pity that, after this breakfast, she would probably never see Lord Wavebourne again.

"And he is so nice!" added she, mentally. But the next moment she smiled, and was assisting her mother at the morning meal.

At its conclusion Lord Wavebourne approached Mrs. Bruce. "I cannot sufficiently thank you and Colonel Bruce for your most kind hospitality," said he. "It is with great regret that I make my adieux."

"But we think that it is *we* who are obliged for your lordship's kindness," returned Mrs. Bruce, courteously. "But for that, my daughter and her friend would have been exposed to that terrible storm."

It had been settled that Colonel Bruce should drive his guest five miles on his way to Lord Marsham's; and so, after a little further exchange of courteous leave-taking, Lord Wavebourne turned his back on the pleasant dwelling where Phyllis lived—but not before he had renewed his invitation to Bertie Bruce, and not before he had said adieu (with something of tenderness in his tone) to the fair Phyllis.

And Phyllis herself gave another little sigh as he drove away with her father.

Would that sigh have changed into a smile if she had followed his lordship on his road, after he had parted with her father? For as the young scion of nobility went on his way by flowery paths and green hedge-rows, he continually whistled or sung this refrain:

"Phyllis is my only joy!"

CHAPTER IV.

MR. MOSS UNBOSOMS HIMSELF TO HIS FRIEND.

AND now that you know how Phyllis and Graham made each other's acquaintance, I hope you will not feel ready to blame her for dreaming of one whom she met but twice before the night of Lady Lorton's ball.

Let us leave her to her sweet dreams (for we need grudge her no moment of her brief joy), and follow the gentleman whom we left awhile ago jogging in his one-horse fly through the dusk of evening.

When another couple of miles of country road had been got through, the fly pulled up at a neat residence embosomed in trees. The driver rung at the gate, and even before the bell had ceased its jangle another middle-aged gentleman appeared, followed by a neat woman-servant.

"Here you are at last! Safe and sound, I trust!" exclaimed the welcoming host. "You must have missed your train, and had to drive nine miles in consequence."

"That is just what happened," said our friend, descending from the fly. "I'm vexed to have kept you up, and lost this evening, which should have been passed in your society."

"Never mind keeping me up! This way! Driver, go round and have some supper."

Then the two gentlemen walked into the house together, and we will accompany them.

"Think of my having been here three years, and that this is the first time you have managed to come to see your old friend!" exclaimed the host, leading his guest into a comfortable study, where cold chicken, wine, and other good things were daintily spread out in anticipation of the expected traveler. "Well, now that you have come into our neighborhood for a month, we must meet often."

"It was the pleasure I promised myself from being able to ride over and see such a good friend as you, Stourby, that made me consent to take the rector's duty at Moor-ridge while he went abroad; otherwise, I should have gone abroad too. Ah! it is delightful to find myself here at last!"

The two old friends clasped hands warmly, and then began a string of kind inquiries about mutual absent friends; after which, as they placed themselves at table, Mr. Moss, our traveler, asked, "How far are you from Morleyvale, Stourby?"

"How far? Not more than three miles. I shall invade you at all hours," said Mr. Stourby, regarding his friend with pleasure beaming in his face.

But, as he gazed, his look of satisfaction changed to one of anxiety.

"You are not well, Moss, surely! I'm quite concerned to find you looking so unlike yourself. When we met in London a few weeks

ago you were the picture of health, and now you seem ill—quite out of sorts!"

"I'm not ill, Stourby; I'm worried! There! I had not meant to say a word of my trouble to-night, but it seems I carry it in my face."

"You do, indeed! But tell me what it is that weighs on you, and if a true friend can help you—"

"You can," interrupted the other, "with your advice."

"With more than that, if necessary," said Stourby.

"No one can help me except by advice in this particular matter," returned Mr. Moss. "But only imagine that I mistook Lorton Court for Morleyvale in driving from Otley Station! You had said the two places were nearly equi-distant from your house, but it appears that I could not have passed Morleyvale, from what the driver told me."

"No; you passed Lady Lorton's, where there is a great entertainment to-night. But never mind Morleyvale just now; tell me of yourself, and of what concerns you. This trouble that has so changed you—"

"That trouble, Stourby, is connected with Morleyvale."

"With Morleyvale?" exclaimed Mr. Stourby, in astonishment.

"Even so. I might as well tell you at once, though we need not decide to-night what had best be done. You remember that my father, like myself, was a clergyman?"

Mr. Stourby nodded.

"And when I was about eighteen he held a curacy in a country village, an out-of-the-way place, where a wedding or a funeral was counted an event of consequence. One day I, who was a lad at home for holidays, heard there was to be a wedding in the village church, and went in to see it for want of something better to do. My father officiated, and I remember, as if it were but yesterday, the looks of the bride and bridegroom. I recall the names, the rustic beauty of the girl, the imposing-looking bridegroom, and that after the wedding was over my father remarked on the evident difference of station in the couple whom he had just joined together. 'The man is a gentleman, and educated,' he said; 'while the bride could not write her own name. However, they are married now, and the rest is no business of mine.'"

"Well?" interrogated Mr. Stourby.

"Well, the matter was not finished for me, though I was only an innocent spectator, and had nothing whatever to do with any of the people concerned."

"How strange!" exclaimed Mr. Stourby.

"But who was the bridegroom?"

"Ah! that I am coming to!" He sunk his voice, and looked cautiously round ere he replied. "It is only lately that I have known who was the bridegroom that day. He was no other than the man who now owns Morleyvale—the Marquis De Vayle!"

"Impossible!" ejaculated Mr. Stourby.

"Unfortunately, it is so," replied Mr. Moss, sadly.

"But what have *you* to do with it?" cried his friend.

"That you will see presently."

"But—but," stammered Mr. Stourby, "there is the present Marchioness De Vayle living, and her sons and daughters. Surely there must be some mistake?"

"I wish I could think it possible!" interrupted Mr. Moss, sighing wearily. "The fact of the matter is, Stourby, I am in *this* position. I have discovered this secret. Am I to be silent and let others suffer wrong from the wish to spare my own feelings and the dread of inflicting agony on those who now believe themselves to be the wife and lawful heirs of the Marquis? It is this which haunts me night and day—this which I am brooding over continually. How dreadful to be the man who says to a lady, high-born and holding an honored position, 'You are not actually the wife of the Marquis De Vayle; your son is *not* the heir to the marquise, nor to the property which goes with it! Think of it!'"

"Dreadful! It is horrible!" exclaimed Mr. Stourby. "And I know the young gentleman who is supposed to be the heir! Such a pleasant fellow he is; and his sisters are refined, delicate girls! How heart-breaking for them if this story be true! Is the first wife living, then?"

"No. But I fear it is incontestable that she died six months after the Marquis was united to his present wife. Consequently that marriage was no marriage!"

There was a momentary silence.

"Consider how this matter weighs upon me," resumed Mr. Moss. "It will be my duty to go and say to Lord De Vayle, 'Your son, supposed to be the Earl of Wavebourne, has no right to that title. You must recognize another heir; and that heir a distant cousin, known to be a spendthrift, with a large family.' Is not this sufficient to make me look ill and miserable?"

Mr. Stourby pressed his friend's hand in silent sympathy.

"To make the matter worse (if worse it could be), there is a rumor that young Wavebourne is about to marry Lady Laura Dorcie, so that such a stroke will fall with tenfold heaviness on him. He will find himself nameless, where he believed himself possessed of an old and honored name, without the legal right to claim a penny of the thousands which he had thought his own."

"Terrible, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Stourby.

"Yes; so terrible, that I sometimes ask myself whether it would not be better to let things rest undisturbed; and then I shudder at the cowardice which makes me shrink from the task which it is my duty to fulfill."

"You must give me some details of this story. How and when did you discover it?" asked Mr. Stourby.

"When? A short time since, only. How? You shall hear. You are aware that the parish of which I am vicar is a scattered one. Now, an old couple who had lived for years in an outlying cottage there have lately died, leaving a granddaughter, who had attended on them in their last illness, in possession of the poor furniture and effects."

"This girl, Lucy Fane, is a good-hearted young woman, but so uneducated that she can barely write her own name, nor can she read writing with ease."

"Now it chanced that, on the very day of her grandparents' funeral, the poor girl slipped down-stairs and broke her leg; and as the cottage had to be given up to other tenants, she entreated me to look over certain packets of papers, it being such a task to her to decipher them."

"I carried these off, then, by her wish, to look them through at my leisure; and amid a mass of old letters and rubbish, opened some papers sewn up with great care in oil-silk. Judge of my surprise at finding among them the marriage certificate of the couple whose wedding I had been present at so long ago, when my own father performed the ceremony. But that did not at once enlighten me."

"Going on with my search, I opened another paper, the certificate of the death of Mary Wavebourne, the very bride whose marriage certificate I had just opened."

"Now the date of the latter certificate makes the death of the first wife six months after the marriage of the present Marchioness De Vayle, Lord Wavebourne's mother."

"Yes; but, my friend," interrupted Mr. Stourby, "how is the person in question proved to have been identical with the first wife of Lord De Vayle?"

"That I will now try to make clear. I went immediately to Lucy Fane, the granddaughter, and questioned her, asking first, 'Did she know any thing about the papers sewn up in oil-silk?'"

"All that's there belonged to grandfather and grandmother," she answered. "My poor Aunt Mary, who died, left them; she had married some one a bit above us all, though they never hardly saw him. But they knew he was well off, 'cos he allowed Aunt Mary plenty to

live on, I've heard tell, after they were separated. For the marriage turned out unhappy, and Aunt Mary left her husband, and came home to her father and mother. I won't say as it wasn't aunt's fault, for she would often take a glass too much, and that drove him to wish they were separated. And you see, sir, aunt didn't really care for him—she cared for his money; and married him for that, though she'd have liked, a great deal better, to have had Jim White, the shoemaker. And so, what with this and the drinking, they separated; but still her husband allowed her enough and plenty to live on. I've heard grandmother tell how she died just afore I was born; and her baby, too. And she's buried in the churchyard here. Grandfather had on'y just come to live here when it happened."

"I said no more to the girl at this time," continued the clergyman, "but my curiosity was awakened, and (unhappily for myself and others) I set about finding out who the Mr. James Graham Wavebourne, who had married Lucy's aunt, might be."

"And the very next evening, as I was turning over the leaves of a Peerage to search for an address I wanted, what should I light on by chance but the name 'James Graham Wavebourne, Marquis De Vayle.' I was startled, but said to myself that it was impossible that he could be the man who had married Mary Fane so many years ago."

"That man came from a place called Havensham," I repeated to myself, referring to the marriage certificate. Well, I could not rest without writing to the postmaster of that village to inquire if he could find out for me whether a Mr. James Graham Wavebourne had been living in the parish of Havensham at that time; and if so, whether it was known what had become of him, or if he were still living there. My letter brought an almost immediate reply. Mr. James Graham Wavebourne, the son of the Hon. Graham Wavebourne (now deceased) had been living at Havensham at the time mentioned, but had since succeeded to the Marquisate of De Vayle. As no other person of the same name had ever been resident in Havensham, that nobleman must be the person I inquired about, wrote the postmaster."

"This answer made me feel certain that my father had performed the marriage ceremony between the present Marquis and a person quite out of his own rank in life. I had, besides, a vivid remembrance of the gentlemanly bearing so unmistakable in the bridegroom, and the uncultured air of the bride."

"Curiosity, coupled with an uneasy feeling that I ought to find out more, led me to go on making other inquiries, but not in such a manner as to raise suspicions of the truth in the mind of Lucy Fane, or that of any other person."

"I went to see the girl again, and asked her if she or her parents had ever known any of the relatives of the man who had married her aunt so long since. 'La, sir!' she said, 'we never so much as saw him—let alone his relations. All we knew was that he seemed well off, and aunt always said he was, and that he didn't work for his living. When she died he wrote to grandfather, but none of us didn't hear no more of him after that, nor never shall, I'll be bound. He didn't care for none of us; and he may be dead, and buried, too, by this time, young as he was then!'"

"Of course," said I; "for it is a long while ago. Still, if he is alive, he would be a near connection of yours, Lucy, though no actual relation."

"What would be the use if he was?" said the girl. "I could not make him give me any of his money, and I shouldn't like to ask him. But he wrote now and agen to poor aunt from London, that I know."

"And where are those letters, Lucy? Are they among the papers you have given me to look over?"

"There, or nowhere, sir," she replied. "I put all the papers together."

"Well, I went home and continued my task

of reading these papers, and sure enough I did find three signed 'J. Graham W.' and merely dated from London. They were not very loving letters—indeed, they were full of reproaches, and asked how she could expect him to take her among his friends while she disgraced him and herself by drinking. He went on to swear that he would not introduce her to his relations as his wife till she had remained temperate for a whole year, and that if she did not speedily lay aside her drinking habits he would never see her again."

Mr. Stourby, who had been listening with keen attention all this time, now eagerly asked his friend what use he had made of these letters."

"Well, you are aware that I had agreed to take the clerical duty at Moor-ridge, so that I was then in communication with the clergyman of the parish in which Morleyvale is situated. Thus it was not difficult for me to ask if one of the envelopes was addressed in the Marquis's handwriting. Mind you, I gave no hint of why I made the inquiry. The answer I received was that certainly the writing, though somewhat faded, was that of the Marquis De Vayle. Now, after putting together the evidence I had collected, you will understand that the next question which suggested itself to me was—"

"What had become of the first wife?—or, rather, when did she die?" interrupted Mr. Stourby.

"Yes, that question haunted me," replied Mr. Moss.

Before he could add more, there came a tap at the door, and the woman-servant entered.

"If you please, sir, it's nigh upon two o'clock in the morning," said she; "and shall I clear away supper?"

"Two o'clock!" exclaimed both gentlemen, rising in surprise. "I'll finish my story in the morning, then," said Mr. Moss, as he followed his friend up-stairs.

CHAPTER V.

A DECISION.

THE morning, which awakened alike the fair Phyllis, the unconscious Graham, his proud father, and Mr. Stourby and his friend, to the duties and pleasures of a new day, brought, among other letters carried into the breakfast-room of Mr. Stourby's neat parsonage, a large, square-shaped coronet-stamped epistle, addressed to the Rev. Septimus Stourby.

"It is from the Marquis himself!" cried the latter gentleman, as he broke the seal. "Look at the handwriting."

Mr. Moss took the letter, and examined it with minute attention, but nothing particular could be said concerning their last night's conversation, as at that moment Mrs. Stourby was preparing breakfast, and two of her daughters were also present.

"I suppose his lordship writes to give us his yearly subscription to the schools," remarked the lady. "That is generally the object of his communications to you. He does not otherwise often favor us with letters."

"Nor do we care that he should do so," replied her husband. "We are not in his own parish, you know, so that it is an act of pure generosity on his part to send any subscription at all for our schools here."

"Generosity! Rich as he is, he ought to be glad to give!" cried Mrs. Stourby.

"Ready to give, and glad to distribute," is not always the rule with your millionaires," remarked her husband. "So let us be contented, my dear, and let us see what he has sent us."

"Five guineas, I suppose, as usual," said Mrs. Stourby.

"No; he has sent nothing for the school, but something for ourselves. He has sent us an invitation to dinner!" remarked her husband.

"To dinner!" cried Mrs. Stourby, half pleased and half aggrieved that these invitations from the great house inhabited by the dominating Marquis came so seldom to the modest inmates of the Parsonage.

"We have to thank our friend Moss for the

honor of this occasion," continued Mr. Stourby.

"Me!" exclaimed Mr. Moss.

"Yes; our invitation is given evidently on your account. There are cards for us all from her ladyship. You see, both the Marquis and Marchioness must needs be civil to the clergyman of their own parish, and you, Moss, are replacing him in his absence. The Marquis heard you were to stay here *en route* for Moorridge, and wishing, no doubt, to make himself agreeable to you, includes us in the invitation which he sends you to a dinner-party."

"How can I possibly accept it?" cried Mr. Moss, much to Mrs. Stourby's surprise.

"But will it not be awkward to begin by refusing a civility, since you must stand in the rector's place for a month to come?" said her husband.

"Oh, I am sure it will, on the whole, be better to accept," added the lady, who remembered that her new silk dress had not yet been worn, and that this would be a good opportunity for displaying it.

So, after some discussion, the invitation to dinner was accepted, though with immense reluctance on the part of Mr. Moss. He reflected, however, that he would now be enabled to satisfy himself the sooner of the identity of the Marquis with the man who had married Mary Fane.

Breakfast over, our two friends went out into the quiet garden of the Parsonage, and there, with the early autumn sunshine lying all about them, and out of danger from listeners, Mr. Moss continued his story of the previous evening.

"That which has come to your knowledge may well make you unhappy," said Stourby. "But can you be really and positively certain that the Marquis married his second wife before the first one was dead?"

"I found, I tell you, the certificate of the death of Mary Fane among those papers, and the date makes it but too clear to me that she was still alive when the Marquis went through the marriage ceremony for the second time."

"The lady who is recognized by every one as the Marchioness De Vayle comes of a noble house. She is the daughter of a duke. Her supposed husband could not have intended to practice a deception on her?"

"No; he may never have intended to practice a deception on anybody; he was separated from the other wife, of whom he was heartily ashamed; had never allowed her to guess his real position in life, and perhaps had heard she was dead. At any rate, he married his present wife, and I sicken at the idea of the misery it may be my painful lot to bring on her."

"Do you know who would inherit should the Marquis's present heir be dispossessed?" asked Mr. Stourby.

"Yes; a betting man, with fast daughters and needy sons. Still, if they are the legal heirs, what right have I to be silent? I should be conniving to cheat these people of what otherwise would be theirs!" And poor Mr. Moss half groaned.

"But let us revert to the certificate of death you found among those papers. Is it possible that you could have made a mistake? Have you clearly ascertained when the second marriage took place, and compared the exact date with the date of the first wife's death?" asked Mr. Stourby.

"My dear fellow, I have done nothing but compare it! The dates are burnt into my memory. The second marriage of the Marquis took place six months before the date on the certificate of death of the first wife."

"And you have already questioned the girl, Lucy Fane?"

"Minutely; till she wondered at what I was driving. She only remembers the death and funeral being alluded to by her grandparents occasionally. The facts seem incontestable. The question now before me is, What ought I to do?"

Mr. Stourby did not reply to his friend's last sentence. The two were walking up and

down the level greensward in the peaceful garden, the old trees overhead just moving their branches in the gentle wind. About them lay the cheery sunlight, touching the many-colored flowers with deeper tints of beauty.

Mrs. Stourby, glancing from her sitting-room window, envied them their leisure and enjoyment, without wishing to disturb it.

"How I should enjoy an idle morning," thought she, "without the thousand cares of the house to attend to!" And then she conscientiously fastened her eyes on the account-book in her hand, after mental calculations as to whether she should have time to go into the village to comfort a bedridden old woman as well as she might, order her own and the servants' dinners, cut out her daughter Florry's dress (which was to be made at home), and give out from the store-closet the necessary articles for household consumption; all before the mid-day meal, which was fixed punctually for one o'clock.

Mrs. Stourby gave one gentle sigh, and one more glance at her husband and his friend still promenading slowly up and down in the pleasant garden. "It is a pleasure to see them so happy," thought she, turning away resolutely.

She need not have envied them. All this time they had paced up and down in silence, and Mr. Stourby had given no answer to his friend's embarrassing question, "What ought I to do?"

"You have asked me a hard thing, Moss," replied he, at length; "and it is a hard thing which you have to do; but in your place—"

He paused.

"Well?" interrogated Mr. Moss.

"In your place I should wait till this dinner to see the Marquis, and make sure whether he is undoubtedly the same man you saw married so many years ago by your father. For it is just possible you may find him so unlike, so much shorter or taller, or generally dissimilar, as to make it pretty sure that he is not the man, after all. But supposing that you do not recognize any similarity, then seek an interview with the Marquis, and tell him the truth in private between yourselves—that would help to clear up many difficulties. After those steps, you will know what next to do."

Mr. Moss drew a deep breath.

"Oh, Stourby," cried he, "you cannot imagine what a relief to me is the bare suggestion that there may yet be a mistake! Yes; I will go to dinner at Morleyvale. Lord De Vayle little dreams of what issues to him and his hang on that invitation! And now let us talk of something else, for I brood on this troublous affair continually, and it is wearing me down in mind and body."

And then the two friends fell gradually into talk on more pleasant themes; and with their eyes turned from that which hung over one of them, they could see the gentle beauty in the peaceful garden, and something of the sunlight penetrated even the disturbed mind of poor Mr. Moss.

CHAPTER VI.

A LOVE-SCENE.

THERE is a dell in the grounds of Lorton Court; a dip between two hills, which is clothed with extraordinary beauty.

Wild roses and honeysuckle in profusion fling down their perfumed branches over this romantic spot, and star the greenery amid which they cluster with their pale pink and richly cream-tinted flowers.

Here, too, the ivy runs riot over the moss-covered sward; the very bushes and the trees overhead seem to shape themselves more picturesquely than do trees and bushes ordinarily. On sunny days it is here that all the birds of the wood tune their songs; and the quiet is so profound, an intruding foot comes this way so seldom, that their melody is rarely disturbed by the voices of men.

But yet this glimpse of Paradise is not too lonely, for just in the most enchanting part of the dell the over-arching branches part grace-

fully, to disclose two gray towers, mantled in ivy, and the outline of a grand old building, enlivened by long windows, glancing back the red rays of the afternoon sun.

There are peeps of gay flowers here and there; the glint, too, of a dancing streamlet, winding its silver thread amid green pastures. Altogether, this is such a beautiful retreat that artists love to visit it, and Lady Lorton never fails to take her visitors to the Dell if they have any feeling for the picturesque.

And she it was who said to Phyllis, the morning after her dance, "We have such a lovely spot to show you, my dear, in our own grounds! You must not leave us without a visit to the Dell; for I know you sketch beautifully. Your mother told me so."

"I shall be delighted to go," said Phyllis, in her fresh, sweet, musical young voice.

How bright the world looked to her this morning! How fair were the rose-tints on her girlish face!

Lord Wavebourne decided with himself that he had never seen any girl so bewitchingly simple.

He hovered near her on every pretense; and his dark eyes wandered continually in deepest admiration toward her.

"We might make up a walking party this afternoon, unless people prefer riding or driving," continued Lady Lorton. "I shall put it to the vote at the luncheon-table."

But, after some gay discussion, her ladyship found that her guests were not disposed for walking. They said the dance had made them feel idle; that the day was too warm for exertion; and so driving and idling carried the day.

"Couldn't I go alone, Lady Lorton?" said Phyllis, aside, as they rose from the table. "It would be so delicious to sit out of doors all the afternoon and sketch in such a spot!"

"The very thing, my dear!" responded her ladyship, cordially. "Ah! you are one after my own heart! You can enjoy life! You are not spoiled by fashions and follies!"

She led the charming Phyllis to the bow-window of the library, and, pointing to a woody eminence in view, said, "The Dell is but a quarter of a mile beyond our nearest entrance to the park. You will easily find it, my dear, by keeping always to the left along the one pathway, which meets you as you leave the park behind. How I should enjoy going with you! But I must think of my other guests, of course. You will not meet a creature; the birds and you will have the Dell all to yourselves."

It sounded charming to Phyllis. She gayly sought her room, and attired herself for the short expedition, taking her small drawing portfolio in her hand.

All things made music in her heart as she came down-stairs dressed for the walk, and very lovely she looked in her becoming robe of French gray summer cashmere, delicately trimmed with ribbon of the same tint. A broad-brimmed hat of exactly the same hue, shaded by curling plumes of gray, completed a costume which added to the young girl's beauty.

What mattered it that the costume had been fashioned anew to meet more modern exigencies of toilet, by Phyllis's own fingers, or that the material had been found amid her mother's bridal trousseau?

It was new in appearance, and more than met the requirements for the summer toilet of a young lady visiting at Lady Lorton's country house. As for the gray plumed hat, that was really fresh from one of the best houses in London; and, to whisper the truth, our fair Phyllis had never worn any thing so costly before.

"You must have something new for this visit, my darling," her father had insisted. "So why not this hat, which your mother says is just the thing that you require to make you quite fashionable?"

And so the hat was bought, and Phyllis looked as lovely in it as either father or mother could desire as she came slowly down the grand staircase at Lady Lorton's.

Some one else thought her very lovely, too; some one who had lingered about, and excused himself from joining the gentlemen of the party, when he found that Phyllis was not to be among the riders.

"Are you going to walk this hot afternoon, Miss Bruce?" a voice asked.

Phyllis looked up, and there stood Lord Wavebourne, at the foot of the staircase.

"Not exactly to walk," replied she, smiling, "though I am going to the Dell. But I shall sketch when I get there. It is so delightful to sit out of doors!"

"Oh, to the Dell!" exclaimed his lordship, while a sudden gleam of satisfaction came into his eyes.

He lingered by her side till she passed out into the warm gardens among the glowing flowers, and then his gaze followed her till he could no longer distinguish her light form amid the foliage of the park. Then a dreamy expression stole over his lordship's face, and after remaining motionless for some moments, he took his hat, and sauntered out into the grounds.

As for Phyllis, she wandered on through an enchanted land, as it seemed to her, until she had reached a very paradise. The fair brightness of all about her, the freedom from home cares, the new life into which she had come so suddenly, where all was ease, luxury and pleasure, had cast its glamour over her, she said to herself. But she might have owned, had she questioned herself more deeply, that it was young Lord Wavebourne's presence, and his words and smiles, which had thrown the warm glow of dawning love about her sunny pathway.

But Phyllis was too happy for self-questionings, as she strayed on amid the sweet scents of the rich afternoon. She reached the Dell without any difficulty, and became at once absorbed in its beauty. Then sitting down on a mossy knoll, took out her pencils and began to work with ardor, full of the thought of the pleasure it would afford her mother if she brought back a colored drawing of the house from this fair spot.

An hour passed very rapidly in this pleasing occupation, and Phyllis had succeeded in getting a rapid and picturesque outline upon paper of an imposing gray-tinted edifice, with old towers rising up against an Italian blue sky, when the silence of the sweet place was broken by a footfall, and Phyllis looked up.

She looked up to behold the tall form, the sunburnt and somewhat tell-tale face, of Graham.

"I hope you will forgive me for invading your solitude," said he, with confusion in his eyes, but admiration looking out of them, too. "The fact is I, like the rest, have been idling about this hot afternoon, and—and finding myself not far from the Dell, thought you would allow me to look at your sketch?"

By this time he was at her side, and Phyllis's fair face had become lightly suffused with a rosy blush.

"I have not done so very much," said she, holding out the sketch.

"How enviable to be able to draw like this!" he exclaimed, taking the book from her; but in reality too much impressed with the perfections of the fair artist herself to be able to put a just value on her performance.

"There is no real work in it," rejoined she, smiling, as she extended her hand for the book.

"Will you let me disturb you for five minutes longer?—that is, if I may watch you at work," said he. "I try to do something in your way myself whenever I am among mountain scenery."

Phyllis could only reply "Of course," but felt at once charmed and embarrassed. She would not wish any of the party at Lady Lorton's to find her there alone with Lord Wavebourne; at the same time, what harm could there be in this chance encounter?

She sat down and confusedly continued her work, while he leaned carelessly upon his stick, watching, or pretending to do so; for

his eyes soon wandered from the paper to her beautiful profile, to her shapely fingers, shell-like ear, and graceful form.

Disparaging comparisons of the Lady Laura before mentioned rushed into his mind. At length he broke silence.

"When is your brother going to school? I hope he will not forget his promise to me; but I will take care that he does not."

"You are very kind," said Phyllis, "but Bertie will think you have acquitted yourself of any promise to him if he may go over and see the stables at Morleyvale some day next year. He will not expect you to entertain him for a whole afternoon."

"But I expect to have that pleasure; and you must not step in to balk our friendship, Miss Bruce. But you do not inquire after Hector, yet I know that he has never forgotten you."

"He is a noble dog. I really hope that he is very well," said Phyllis, with another blush.

"Well in health, but unhappy in spirit to-day, I expect, since he lacks my society, poor fellow!"

"Is he *always* unhappy when you leave?" asked Phyllis, moved by her compassionate feeling for Hector to raise her own liquid blue eyes to Graham's dark ones.

"I fear so. He misses me more than any one in the world. If I were to stay away from Morleyvale for a whole year, my father would not pine, my mother would not lose her appetite, my sisters would dance and dress with just as much zest, while my brothers would cry 'Hurrah! now we can ride Graham's horses just when we like!' But Hector would not eat with as good an appetite, nor feel inclined to gambol and make merry. And he certainly would pine, and a mournful expression would steal into his great eyes, and he would lie listening for my footstep."

Phyllis found Hector so interesting that she forgot to go on with her drawing, or even to feel a faint wish that Hector's master would leave her alone in the Dell.

"I wonder if any one else will ever care for me—me exclusively—as Hector does?" continued his lordship, approaching a little nearer to the young girl. "Is any one *ever* so loved by any human being, I wonder? Is it your belief, Miss Bruce?"

"That—that—human beings can be as devoted as dogs, do you mean?" asked Phyllis, somewhat confused.

"Yes; I think that is what I *did* mean to convey. Tell me what you believe as to that?"

"I think there have been instances—instances of great devotion which human beings have shown toward each other," replied she.

"Yes; that is true. But how could I ever look to meet with it? As a matter of fact, I do not; but yet one dreams!"

After which somewhat sentimental remark, his lordship became, momentarily, silent; silent, with the soft summer wind stirring all about them, and all the summer voices in their ears.

"There are some people who envy me, I am aware," continued his lordship, breaking off a twig of honeysuckle and turning it idly in his fingers; "but is mine so very enviable a lot, after all? To be always associated with so much wealth, made part and parcel of it, is in a way melancholy. And when I marry—that is, if I marry after the fashionable plan" (Phyllis, with a pang at heart, gave much attention to the outline of the distant tower)—"when I *do* marry, what happiness shall I gain by it? The lawyers will discuss the necessary settlements, and—the affair will be settled for me. Shall I find—or give, for the matter of that—any of Hector's devotion?"

"Is it possible to indulge such misanthropic ideas in so lovely a spot?" said Phyllis, with a smile.

But her smile was just touched with sadness, and as she spoke she rose and began to put up

her brushes, remarking, "I think I have done enough for to-day."

"Oh, don't say so!" he cried; "and don't leave off, or I shall feel that it is *I* who have prevented the completion of your beautiful sketch. Will you promise to let me see it again when finished, and also to forgive me for coming here to interrupt you as I have done?"

"Willingly," smiled Phyllis.

"Do you like wild roses?" continued he, hastily gathering a lovely spray of those flowers. "Did you ever try them for your hair? Try these to-night; but let me first take away the thorns."

"Do not let me give you so much trouble," responded Phyllis, demurely.

"How do you know that I regard it as trouble?" asked he, with a look beneath which her blue orbs fell. "You shall find a bouquet of these roses on your dressing-table," he continued, plucking clusters from the hedge. "I make you but a poor offering, yet it is made at least with the sincere feeling that the fragrance and sweetness of the roses have something akin to her to whom they are offered."

She heard him silently, but a blush rose to her charming face.

"You must forgive the egotism which made me speak as I did just now. What right have I to look for devotion any more than other fellows? Not even so much right, I fancy! But" (and here he put out his hand, and took her fingers into his)—"but indeed I would give a good deal, and expect but a little in return! I would be humble, like Hector!"

He said the last words in a very low voice, and then carried himself away, bearing the roses destined for her in his hand.

And then Phyllis was left alone, his looks seeming still upon her, and with his tones, his words ringing in her ears; while the honeysuckles and the roses clustered round her, lending their help to the enchantment of her senses.

What wonder that Love whispered to her heart, and that she repeated to herself, "I would be humble, like Hector!"

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE'S PROGRESS.

"My dear Phyllis, where did you find your charming roses?" asked Lady Lorton, when her young guest appeared in the saloon, dressed for dinner, wearing a spray of the wild flowers in her golden-brown hair, and a bouquet of their blossoms in her dress.

"They grew in the Dell," replied Phyllis, with a blush.

"Ah, in the Dell! What a charming idea to have brought away some wild roses!"

"Nothing makes so pretty an ornament!" remarked Lord Wavebourne, sauntering toward them.

And as Lady Lorton moved away to speak to another guest, the young man murmured in Phyllis's ear, "A thousand thanks for using my poor flowers!"

Again Phyllis blushed; and she rejoiced just then that dinner was announced, and the move down-stairs began.

Another day dawned and waned, and again Lady Lorton's guests were assembled for dinner. The repast was full of laughter and gayety; but the merry party did not linger over it, for many visitors had been invited to witness some amateur theatricals which were to commence immediately after dinner.

Pending the announcement of the first arrival, and during the inevitable last preparation for a performance of this kind, Graham (who was not among the actors) drew Phyllis into a balcony, where the perfume of flowers was wafted from below, and the stars looked down on them from the clear blue sky above.

"I was not so fortunate to-night, Miss Bruce," began he. "Some one else carried you off to dinner. I did nothing but envy the man all the time."

Phyllis tried to laugh carelessly, but she detected the earnestness under his light words.

"Do let me secure you for as many dances as you can give me for Lady Cleugh's ball?" continued he. "Unless I am beforehand with others, you will have no dances free for me."

"I am forced to confess," replied Phyllis, blushing under the starlight, "that I have not, until now, been asked for one dance! Thus, you see, there is no hurry."

"And do you suppose," he rejoined, "that you will have been five minutes in the ball-room without your card being full? How many dances will you promise me?"

"I shall be very glad to keep a valse and a quadrille for you," said she; adding, quickly, "We had better now take our seats. I think people are arriving."

"The actors are dressing. There will yet be a good half-hour to wait before all is ready. And is it not more pleasant here than in the warm saloon?"

"Oh, yes," she answered; "but I thought we ought to take our seats with the audience."

"The audience has yet to appear," replied he. "Do not shorten these delicious moments! Will you accept these flowers," (bending toward her), "and honor them as you did my poor offering of yesterday?"

With another blush, though the twilight was all around them now, the fair girl in silence took the roses he held out—a dark rose of the most glowing damask, and another of the richest cream-tint.

Such a gift might mean any thing or nothing, but Phyllis's heart glowed as she fastened the flowers into her dress.

"How is it," said he, in softest accents, "that we go on living contentedly enough for years of our life, and then, all at once, meet some one—a stranger, perhaps, till yesterday—and our whole existence becomes changed? Nothing is commonplace any more to us; we live then for the first time! Is there a law of affinity?—and, having found our affinity, are we thenceforth inspired by another soul akin to our own?"

"We have to think of much more prosaic matters to-night," replied Phyllis, as lightly as she could.

Was this love-making in disguise?

"Yes; I know," said he; "we are going to see a representation of very fashionable society—as if we did not have enough of that in our daily life! It would be very pleasant if we could all be more simple!"

"Perhaps I, who only know the more simple side of life, should find the other side amusing occasionally," smiled Phyllis. "Now I am really going to find a seat among the spectators, for I am sure the curtain will shortly draw up."

"One moment!" said he, gently. "May I have this? I would so prize it!"

And he touched a half-withered spray at her girdle.

Phyllis relinquished it in silence, and he followed her to the well-lighted room, into which gay visitors were trooping every moment.

"Let me find you a seat here," said Graham, presenting a chair, and taking care to secure the vacant place at her side.

Did Phyllis follow very intently the little play enacted before her? I am afraid not. Even when the actors were making their wittiest speeches, and the spectators applauding most loudly, Phyllis was thinking of the words, the tones, just breathed in her ear by Graham in the balcony.

The evening sped quickly by, for was not he by her side? It was Graham, too, who took her down to supper after the theatricals were over, and who hovered by her side.

Phyllis had golden dreams that night, and though vague, they were blissful.

What girl of Phyllis's innocent simplicity stays to calculate her chances of success, or asks herself when her lover will speak definitely of his love?

No; such sweet natures love and dream, and vaguely hope, the adored one's presence being for them bliss sufficient.

To see Graham, and talk to him in this happy way of friendliness; to look forward to meet him some day again, and to remember these happy hours—this was all that fair Phyllis proposed to herself. The coronet he could offer her, the broad lands, the lavish wealth—all these things retired into the background when the girl unconsciously estimated Graham's perfections.

Next day there was to be a picnic; and, immediately after the morning meal, the large party staying at Lorton Court were to ride or drive to a ruined abbey in the neighborhood, about ten miles distant.

"Lady Lorton, let me ask you a favor," said Graham, finding his hostess a moment alone. "Persuade Miss Bruce to allow me to drive her in the phaeton. I am a good whip."

Her ladyship smiled, and also suppressed a little sigh. She saw which way the wind was blowing, but would have liked Lord Wavebourne to take a fancy to one of her girls.

However, he had evidently lost his heart to Phyllis Bruce, and what was the use of thwarting him?

So she said to Phyllis, who just then appeared, "I am going to send you in the phaeton, my dear. You will have a good charioteer, for Lord Wavebourne will drive you."

Phyllis's heart gave a sudden, joyful throb.

To sit by Graham's side as they drove through the delicious country—what a morning it would be to remember next week, when she would be at home again, occupied in her simple duties—next week, and always!

They started in the freshness of the morning, the wind blowing softly, the sun bright as a lover's hopes. Graham's horses went at so good a pace that the phaeton was soon far ahead of the carriages; but as the ground ascended, the horses consented to go at a slower rate. Then he began to tell Phyllis about Morleyvale, and about their place in Scotland. Had she ever been among the moors? No! Ah! he hoped that pleasure would not be long deferred. His mother and sisters would be sure to be going to Scotland next year, and when they had made her acquaintance, would be delighted to welcome her there.

But how could Phyllis, who was far removed from the whirl of society in which those ladies lived—how could she make their acquaintance? She found herself now at Lorton Court only because Lady Lorton was her mother's oldest friend, not because she belonged to the gay world of fashion.

"You must promise to come to Scotland when my mother can receive you, or—or—I shall not care to go there myself," concluded Graham, in a tone so low that only Phyllis's ear distinguished his words; and the smart groom, sitting with folded arms on the back of the phaeton could not catch even a syllable.

Oh! it was all delight this whirling past green hedgerows and noble trees. And when the drive was at an end, and the old abbey had been duly visited, and a gay *al fresco* banquet partaken of, they drove back to Lorton Court in like manner.

And then came the ball at Lady Cleugh's, where Graham did not forget to claim all the dances Phyllis could give him.

He was to make his adieux to-night, for the Marquis had pressed his son to return for some important gathering at Morleyvale on the morrow.

"I shall see you again very soon! And if I come before next month, you must pardon me, for I shall count the days till we meet."

This was what Graham said to Phyllis as he pressed her hand at leave-taking. And she carried the words in her heart as the train wafted her away from Lorton Court.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LIFE OVERTURNED.

WHILE Graham was whispering this tender adieu, which awakened so many hopes in the heart of the fair Phyllis, something very different, something fraught with bitterest

pain to him, was going on at the stately mansion of Morleyvale.

The Marquis sat in his library, a magnificent room divided by lofty pillars supporting a frescoed ceiling, where mythological personages disported themselves in air and sea.

Hundreds of volumes in costly bindings lined the apartment; the doors were of polished cedar, and articles of value met the eye on every side; while, through the wide windows of plate glass, the enchanting summer landscape unrolled itself. Wide-spreading woods stretched over the undulations of the park, and a silver stream, visible from the library windows, gave another touch of beauty to the scene.

But, as the owner of this magnificent property reclined in his velvet chair, he was not enjoying the loveliness without. No; he had been giving directions to the steward about certain things which he wished done on the estate during his absence on his Scottish moor, and his lordship felt worried lest his directions should not be carried out precisely as he wished. Subordinates were so bungling!

A frown was still on his lordship's brow as he pondered the business in hand, when a servant entered with a letter. With a dissatisfied air, he broke the seal carelessly. "The messenger waits for an answer, my lord," said the man.

"Stay, then," said the Marquis, somewhat imperiously. But the words which met the nobleman's eye caused him such surprise that he forgot the business which had so much absorbed him a moment previously, and said to the servant, "Come for my answer when I ring."

"Yes, my lord," replied the man, retiring.

"Why, what can this mean? And from Mr. Moss, too?"

A flush mounted to the brow of the Marquis, and he passed his hand over his face as he perused the letter.

"My Lord:

"You will remember that sudden illness recently prevented my accepting your lordship's invitation to dinner, and I am under the painful necessity of recalling that circumstance to your recollection. I have used the word *painful*, because it is always a grief to me to cause trouble, and I must now (how unwillingly!) inflict great sorrow on your lordship.

"It is altogether out of my power to express what I have suffered—and still suffer—on this account; it has indeed affected my health, and I have now come to the resolution to confer with your lordship on the subject, which I beg to explain in no way concerns myself, although it has devolved on me—in a very unexpected manner—to bring a very sad affair to light.

"It is impossible to write all I would say, and I, therefore, beg an interview with your lordship in your own interest entirely, for gladly would I lay aside this matter altogether. My messenger will await your reply, and, if convenient to you, I will be with your lordship at three o'clock this afternoon."

The Marquis read this letter twice over, and then, with unsteady hand, scrawled an answer:

"He would be happy to see Mr. Moss at Morleyvale at the hour stated in Mr. Moss's letter, and sincerely regretted the trouble and ill-health under which he was laboring."

Then, with an unpleasant foreboding of coming ill, the Marquis waited for three o'clock. But he said nothing to the Marchioness, who was full of plans for the autumn. Graham, too, was expected to-day. He had written yesterday to say that he should reach home early; and everybody at Morleyvale, by anticipation, felt a pleasure in the young lord's return as great as that which Hector was fully to realize by-and-by.

His father, who had arrangements to make with him about what dogs and horses were to go to Scotland, hoped the interview with Mr. Moss would be well over before Graham's return.

It was not often that the heart of the proud Marquis De Vayle beat so quickly as it did that day, when, punctually at three o'clock, the clergyman who had written to him in such mysterious terms was ushered into his library. But he allowed no trace of his emotion to appear as he courteously came forward to receive his visitor.

The two gentlemen shook hands, and seated

themselves, while the Marquis said, "I am all attention, Mr. Moss."

And then he threw himself back in his easy-chair, waiting with well-concealed anxiety for what was coming next.

And Mr. Moss essayed to speak, but for the moment found no words in which to convey that which must prove so unwelcome.

Lord De Vayle noted that his visitor was laboring under very powerful emotion.

"My lord," began the latter, in a broken voice, "duty is sometimes a hard mistress, but we must obey her commands."

"Certainly—certainly, Mr. Moss," replied his lordship.

"It is duty—or, rather, conscience—which brings me here to-day, and it is my unwillingness to obey her dictates which has pressed on me so heavily. I have already explained that this matter will greatly affect your lordship."

"Yes, yes," again replied the Marquis, shortly.

"But still, I fear that I have scarcely prepared your lordship for hearing what I have to communicate. The sad discovery I have arrived at was made by pure chance (if there be such a thing in human affairs); it was none of my seeking. And deeply do I regret that this unhappy affair has been forced upon me."

"Come to the point, Mr. Moss," said his lordship, somewhat agitated.

"When your lordship was quite a young man, and I a lad of eighteen, I was present at a marriage performed in a quiet country village. My father read the ceremony, and I wandered into the church from boyish curiosity or want of something better to do. Unhappily for myself, this fixed the matter in my memory, but in the many events of after-life it faded from recollection for a time; nor did I then imagine that that long-forgotten affair would come to me as a matter concerning right or grievous wrong-doing. My lord, without knowing it at the time, I am now aware that the bride on that occasion was a girl in domestic service, and that the bridegroom was your lordship!"

Every vestige of color had left the Marquis's bronzed face before the conclusion of this address. He rose from his easy attitude in much evident distress, striking his forehead with his hand.

"Oh, Heaven!" he cried, striding across the wide apartment. "Would you bring that madness of my youth against me to-day? And to what purpose? Had I been a villain, I might have deceived the girl, for she was ignorance itself. I might have inveigled her into a mock marriage. But I did not; because, in my infatuation, I acted like an honorable man. Would any one bring against me that long-past folly which is hidden from my wife—hidden from my children—from the carping world? My first wife bitterly disgraced me. I did not dream what sort of woman I had married. She herself felt unworthy to share my position, which, however, she only believed to be that of a private gentleman, with some means. It was well that I should abstain for the sake of my family and relatives from all mention of her—that her memory should sink into oblivion. It was merciful that Heaven removed her by death—most merciful that she left no child to inherit the titles and estates, which afterward fell to me. Why, then"—he spoke almost fiercely here—"why do you come after so many years have passed, to remind me of that which I would so gladly forget?"

"Because," said the clergyman, standing heavy-eyed and mournful before him—"because your marriage with Mary Fane renders your present union illegal—your children illegitimate!"

It would be impossible to depict the misery, the horror which flew over the face of the nobleman; but relief showed itself as quickly.

"You mistake, Mr. Moss," said he. "My first wife had been six months in her grave before I married Lady Theresa Vallemache."

"You supposed so; but that could not have been the fact. It is a cruel thing for your

lordship to hear now, and a cruel truth for me to tell."

"Cruel!" cried the Marquis, after a momentary gasp as if for breath—"cruel! It is incredible! It is untrue! You have been made to believe this story, Mr. Moss; but it is a fabrication."

"Would that it were!" exclaimed the clergyman. "But I have seen the proof—the proof which I discovered in the most accidental manner. Your first wife's niece, who is now living, but who has no idea of your identity or whereabouts, has been the unconscious means of enlightening me, and making it my duty not to let your lordship's estates pass to a wrong heir."

"Oh, what can you mean?" exclaimed the wretched nobleman. "Would you proclaim this matter to the world?—would you kill the Marchioness with the story that she is no lawful wife?—would you brand my children with a stigma which nothing could remove?—make my name and wealth pass to a stranger?"

Mr. Moss interrupted him.

"I would proclaim nothing to the world; but would urge you to do justice in the way least painful to your family, who have such imperative claims on your lordship."

"Justice!" cried the latter, bitterly. "Such justice as you urge must necessitate a proclamation of all this to the world—must strike death to my wife and to my children! But I tell you that my first wife had been months in her grave before I ventured to look forward, and hope for happiness with the lady who is now the Marchioness De Vayle."

"Did you see the certificate of death, my lord? Did you ascertain the date of the decease of your first wife?"

"I saw her parents. I heard all the details of the death. They described to me every particular of her last moments—gave me her last message. I could not have been deceived."

"But your lordship, relying on the truthfulness of the account given you, did not ascertain for yourself the date of your first wife's death?"

Lord De Vayle was silent, and the clergyman repeated his question.

In much agitation, the Marquis rose from his seat, and once more traversed the apartment.

"It is true that I did not think it necessary to doubt the account given me. I did not see my wife's dead body, for I was abroad at the time of her last illness. And what possible object could her relatives have had in so deceiving me?"

"Ah, that it is impossible for me to divine; but that they did deceive your lordship is too evident. When your marriage certificate fell into my hands, together with the certificate of the death of your first wife, I was startled enough to be roused to make inquiries in the village where she died. There is the headstone, with the date, to support what I say, and several of the villagers remember the time of the funeral. The medical man, too, is living who gave that certificate of death. It seems that a child was born, which only survived its mother's loss a few days."

The Marquis, overcome by the recapitulation of this evidence, sunk again on his seat, and looked at the clergyman with an air of bewildered misery.

"What can I do?" he half moaned—"what can I do to disprove this wretched story?"

"Nothing, I fear," replied the clergyman, with deep commiseration. "But let me urge your lordship to make inquiries into my statement, and ascertain for yourself its truth or falsehood; and if, unhappily, it should be true—"

"Well?" cried the nobleman, as a horrible fear shot through him that this dreadful tale might prove a reality—"well, supposing that for a moment, what would you have me do? Would you have me proclaim my wife—my wife by all the laws of Heaven!—to be no wife? Would you have me make my son, who has been brought up as my heir, a beggar?"

"Hear me, my lord!" cried the clergyman, solemnly. "If this painful story cannot be disproved, your lordship must be re-married privately. That will reinstate the Marchioness in the position she has always believed herself to hold. The world need be told nothing now; but your title and estates must pass away from your son, at your death, to the legal heir. It must be your lordship's care to provide now for the future of your eldest son and of your own children. Out of your yearly income a modest provision can surely be secured to them all? They cannot hope to be wealthy; they must lay aside (at least at your lordship's death) their proud title; but it can be done quietly. Some of the inevitable pain attending this needful step may be avoided. Your sons and daughters will not be shut out from the home which is now your lordship's; and it should be your care to provide for them by will a part of that of which all was supposed to be theirs by right. My part in the affair will be over when I have secured that the lawful heirs shall not be wronged."

"You think nothing, then, of my own son being wronged, Mr. Moss," said the Marquis, with bitterness. "My heir is to lose all, then—name, dignities, wealth—all to which he was, by every law of Heaven and man entitled?"

He had raised his voice in his excitement, and had not heard the quiet entrance of some one who had come in by a door at the extreme end of the apartment; but as he uttered the last words, he looked round, and saw Graham two paces from him.

CHAPTER IX.

SHATTERED HOPES.

"WHAT is this, father?" asked the son quietly, looking from one to the other of the agitated faces confronting him.

The young man spoke calmly; but was deeply moved, for he had overheard the last sentence; "My heir is to lose all, then—name, dignities, wealth—all to which he was, by every law of Heaven and man, entitled?"

Neither his father nor Mr. Moss could reply to him; they were confounded by his unexpected presence.

"Why am I to lose, or be in danger of losing name and wealth?" continued Graham. "I am surely your son, father? Who can deprive me of my name?"

"No one, I hope and trust," replied his father, in a voice that was sadly shaken. "Your father will defend your rights so far as possible."

"So far as possible!" echoed Graham. "Who, then, can touch them?"

There was silence.

"Father!" cried the young man, "speak to me—explain this mystery, which has so suddenly arisen! Am I, or am I not, your son?"

"You are my son—indisputably mine—mine and your mother's. Do not disquiet yourself about that, Graham; leave me to settle it!"

"I cannot do that, father. I must disquiet myself till I know all. I come home to hear that my very name and title are in danger of passing away from me! What does this mean? I must know! If you will not tell, I must go to my mother!"

"No, no, rash boy! Would you kill her with this dreadful story?" cried his father impetuously.

"Kill her—kill my mother? You will kill me if you do not speak out clearly! What has this gentleman to do with it? Why does he come here?"

"Oh, this is dreadful!" groaned the Marquis.

"Anything is better than suspense!" said Graham, resolutely, though his manly, handsome face had grown pale since he entered that room where he had heard his position and name alluded to as being endangered. "Sir," (turning to Mr. Moss), "tell me all that you know concerning this matter, in which I am so deeply interested!"

"Have I your permission to speak, my lord?" asked Mr. Moss, himself much distressed by Graham's presence.

"Permission! It is late to ask it now!" exclaimed Lord De Vayle. "You have come here to overturn my life! My son has knowledge of some impending evil! It is not necessary now to ask my permission!"

"Speak, and tell me all!" said Graham, in a low voice, while his father buried his face in his hands, with a groan.

"It is unavoidable now, indeed," said the clergyman; "and sorry indeed am I to have brought hither such affliction. Let me tell this wretched matter very shortly. The Marquis, when a young man, contracted a marriage which it was not necessary he should afterward acknowledge, for the person he had married died, leaving no children; and she had disgraced him by a habit of drinking to excess. But, unhappily, her parents deceived the Marquis as to the date of her death, and he formed a second marriage while his first wife was still living."

"Oh!" groaned Graham, sinking onto a chair, "this is maddening! My mother!—oh, my mother!"

"She must not know! It would kill her!" cried his father, starting up. "Oh, my boy, if this frightful story be, indeed, correct, I can right your mother—a re-marriage will do that! But you, my heir—you, and my other children! It will send me to my grave!"

The young man could say nothing in reply; a chill of despair was creeping round his heart. Three or four minutes went by before he again spoke.

"Is there a doubt—a hope that this may be disproved?"

"I fear there is no doubt," said the clergyman. The Marquis spoke not.

"And what are the proofs on the strength of which I am to lose my inheritance and my name?" asked the young man, bitterly.

The clergyman, in a husky voice, detailed them once more.

And as he listened, Graham was convinced.

He saw, though his brain reeled with anguish, that his father had never meant to deceive any one. He had simply been silent as to a youthful imprudence, and this misery and despair was the result.

Even amid his own utter wretchedness, his immeasurable woe, he felt pity for his father. He went up to him, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Father," he said, speaking more tenderly than was his wont, "you must not sink into despair. We all need your help now. You must think of my mother—of us all! Rouse yourself, father, and we will, together, prove or disprove this story. If it is true, we will, at least, be honorable; we will do justice when the hour arrives. Till then, we may be silent!"

"Silent! If it be proved true, Graham, I shall pine for the silence of the grave!"

"But you must not think of the grave, father!" said Graham, desperately. "You must live for my mother—for all of us! Who has been told this tale besides ourselves?"

"One person only," interrupted Mr. Moss, in a hollow voice, "and I will answer for his silence as for my own. My lord, I alone made this painful discovery; to secure justice is all I seek. Why should a word of this story be told to the world till your father's death? And then, only, because the legal heir must in justice inherit the estates."

"Then at present we may end this painful interview," said Lord De Vayle. "Graham, my poor boy, we will talk matters over together."

"Yes, father; but I must first collect data on which to proceed; then I can act."

He drew aside the clergyman, and carefully, though briefly, questioned him, making notes of his answers. Then he perused the certificate of marriage and that of death.

"You shall hear from me after I have sifted this matter, sir," said Graham, accompanying the clergyman as far as the door.

When he had done so, he stood listening ere he dared return across the mansion to the room where he had left his father. For could he suffer his face to be seen by his mother and sisters, with despair so legibly written there?

Stealthily—how new a thing concealment was to Graham!—he stole back, and found his father still in the same posture in which he had left him. Graham sat down near him.

"I want you to listen to me, father," said he. "I shall start at once to prove or disprove this story, and it will devolve on you to maintain appearances before my mother. Tell her that business for you, which has to be settled about the estate before we go to Scotland, necessitated my leaving without seeing her, and account for your own depressed state by complaining of illness. Oh, father, if this is true, I shall begin my new life at once, in some distant land, and there my brothers can ultimately join me. But my sisters must be provided for. They must not be left to battle with the world. It will be hard enough for them, Heaven knows, to face their altered position!"

He broke down here, but soon recovered sufficient mastery of himself to go on.

"I came back with such hopes, father, and also with such fears—fears that you would not countenance my new hopes! That is all over now!"

"Of what do you speak, Graham?" asked the Marquis, looking up from his despondent attitude. "My poor boy! I fear you have formed an attachment to some young lady, and just when you looked for my sanction, this which has fallen upon us comes to blight your life and wishes, and to kill your father!"

"That must not be!" said Graham. "You must rouse yourself from your present mood, father; you owe it to my mother. Let me say one word more, and I will go on my search, and get the highest legal opinion before I relinquish hope entirely. Father, if by any chance this blight upon our lives is removed, and happiness comes back to us, may I then hope that you will sanction my attachment to Miss Bruce? She is Colonel Bruce's eldest daughter, and I have met her at Lady Lorton's and—elsewhere."

"Graham," said the Marquis, rising, "I confess that had I heard this under other circumstances, I should have opposed your wishes strenuously. I had set my heart on your marriage with Lady Laura Doycie. But things have greatly altered for me within the short space of the last two hours; and if we do regain our happiness, then, Graham, I will not say no to your wish to marry Miss Bruce. You have not made one reproach to me, my dear boy; how could I thwart your dearest hopes?"

"A thousand thanks, father!" said the young man, in a broken voice. "But my heart misgives me that I shall never dare to tell her of my love. Good-by, father!"

"Stay, Graham! If, when you have sifted this matter, and had a legal opinion, all seems well, send me a telegram with that one word, and I shall understand; but if all seems adverse, write. The certainty of the bitter truth will reach me soon enough in the ordinary way."

"Yes, father," again said Graham; then, clasping his father's hand, he left him.

What days of agony followed!—days during which the Marquis sat inactive, or watched for the telegram which never arrived.

After the lapse of a week a letter came, and the Marquis fainted after reading it. It contained but two lines; but those few words completed the despair of the unhappy nobleman:

"There is no hope. The thing is quite clear. I will follow this—shall go abroad almost immediately."

CHAPTER X.

HOPE DEFERRED.

"I SHALL see you again very soon. And if I come before next month, you must pardon me, for I shall count the days till we meet."

What could such words mean, but that he

was coming to lay that devotion of which he had spoken at her feet?

And Phyllis said joyfully to her own heart, "Let him come! He will offer me all that I have not; but I can give him that which he would deem a treasure—that which silver and gold is powerless to buy. And so let him come!"

"I hope he will bring Hector!" she added, a blissful sensation flooding her heart.

"How lovely our Phyllis looks!" remarked her happy mother to Colonel Bruce. "If the dear girl could be improved, I should say that this visit to Lady Lorton's has improved her."

The Colonel laughed. "She did not disgrace her ladyship's saloon, we may feel assured."

"No, indeed!" said the fond mother.

Yes; Phyllis had come back full of the happiness which irradiated her young life. He was coming! But till he came she must be silent. How could she speak of hopes as certainties, which yet, however, were certainties to her?

And so she waited, not uttering Graham's name, though she said to herself every evening as it fell, how rejoiced her dear father and mother would be at her happy lot.

"I think it was that chance meeting in the wood which began it all," thought Phyllis; "the evening of the thunderstorm, when Ettie Fordbury sprained her ankle. Oh, I little dreamed then of the felicity that storm was to cause me!"

And so Phyllis waited, and hoped, and rejoiced.

The days sped on in her father's peaceful home till the month had rolled away and another began—the time of which he had spoken when he said, "If I come before next month you must pardon me."

One day rose and fell after another, but still the fair girl waited in vain. Autumn drew on; the sun still flooded the little garden, and many flowers remained to brighten it; but the roses were all gone now, and the early frosts were nipping the geraniums. And not till now did Phyllis begin to ask herself, "Has he forgotten?"

Over her beautiful trust and fresh young love a cold mist came creeping. Had she been very foolish, after all? Had she thought much of a few flattering speeches, a few admiring looks, which meant nothing?

She grew sad, though she fought against mistrust; and the Colonel remarked to his wife that their dear girl was unhappy.

"Unhappy! Surely not!" exclaimed Mrs. Bruce, quickly.

"I am afraid it is so," replied the Colonel.

It was on that same morning that Bertie Bruce, who was at school near Morleyvale, favored his parents with a letter.

"I am so sorry," wrote the boy, "that Lord Wavebourne is going abroad all in a hurry, for he is such a jolly fellow, and I did so look forward to spending a day at Morleyvale. The fellows here thought no end of me for knowing such a swell. Not that I like him because he is a swell, but he is so jolly altogether. But something is up at Morleyvale, I imagine, for Lord Wavebourne came back in a desperate hurry, and now he has gone off abroad, or is going, and it is whispered about that he never means to come back! Perhaps that mayn't be true; but at any rate he won't be here, and I'm jolly sorry."

This letter was read aloud at the breakfast-table by Mrs. Bruce, to whom it was addressed, and she looked up, smiling, at her eldest daughter, expecting to meet an answering smile at Bertie's effusion. But no smile met her gaze. In place of it, a deadly whiteness stole over Phyllis's fair face, and her lips quivered with pain.

"What is it, my child?" asked the mother, surprised, terrified, conjecturing all sorts of things in a moment.

For answer, Phyllis rose hastily and fled upstairs, until she reached the shelter of her own small bedroom, where she could no longer control her grief, and where she began to sob as if her heart would break.

Thither Mrs. Bruce followed her, after a short interval. She gave her child time to recover the first burst of grief, and then, with sorrow at her own heart, went after her dar-

ling. For it was but too plain now what had been the result of that visit to Lady Lorton's; Lord Wavebourne had paid her dear girl attention, and she had learned to love him—to love him who had forgotten his light words at once.

Bitterness, pity, and pain were surging in the mother's heart as she entered her daughter's small chamber. Phyllis was not weeping now, but stood by the old-fashioned casement, gazing across the landscape—gazing without being conscious of what she saw, and the very picture of despair.

"Phyllis, my darling, what is it?" asked her mother, gently, approaching her with a look of fond anxiety.

But the sorrow-stricken girl gave no answer.

"Will you not tell me, dearest, what has so troubled you?"

Then Phyllis turned her young face toward the tender eyes regarding her, and her lips tried to reply, "It is nothing, dear mother!" But in the effort she broke down altogether, and throwing her arms around her mother's neck, could only try to check her tears.

"Oh, my dear child!" cried Mrs. Bruce, entreatingly, "my heart tells me what you are suffering. Lord Wavebourne has made you believe you were all in all to him, and you have supposed him to be as true-hearted as yourself! Is it so, Phyllis?"

"Perhaps," said she, raising her face from her mother's shoulder, "perhaps it is I alone who am to blame for imagining that he felt more than he said. But he said—he said that he should so soon see me again; and Bertie's news has been to me a cruel blow. Oh, mother, I will forget it all! You had not believed that a daughter of yours could think of any one without being sure first that she was really cared for, had you, mother? But you shall see that I can be very sensible now—indeed you shall!" This in a voice of utter woe.

We will not stay to repeat all the tender things said by Mrs. Bruce. Phyllis again and again entreated her mother to think no more of what had happened, assuring her that she should see that she could be very sensible—that she would never, never be so foolish again.

"Foolish and sensible are hardly the terms to apply to this trouble that has come to us," replied Mrs. Bruce.

"Yes, dear mother, perhaps they are. I ought to have known that he could not really care for me; or that, if he did, his own people would strenuously object."

After this, Phyllis talked no more about it, and entreated her mother not to speak of it to her. And the girl went about all her daily tasks as usual; she even put more energy into them; but her step flagged, her once bright face grew touchingly sad. If she shed tears, no eye saw them. Active, alert, a cheerful word always ready for her father, her mother, or her young brothers and sisters, no one could say where the change was; and yet there was a change palpable to all.

The old vicar of the parish in which Colonel Bruce lived began to say that Miss Phyllis needed change of air, and that the Colonel must take better care of her.

Alas! no outward care could put back the sunshine which was darkened for her when Graham, as she believed, went away forgetting her. But Phyllis was brave now. She broke down no more; only hidden grief was gnawing her life away.

November set in. Cold winds began to sweep over the country, and to moan in the branches of the trees; but they were not so cold as the chill at Phyllis's young heart, nor was the moaning so grievous as the silent lamentation that would make itself heard in her saddened soul.

Her sunshine, which had dazzled her with its brightness, had suddenly given place to a dull, colorless night. He was gone—gone!—and had forgotten her; or, even worse, had never cared! While she—ah! she loved him still, and must always love him.

One morning, on coming down to breakfast to recommence another hopeless day, Phyllis found a letter awaiting her, addressed in a handwriting she did not recognize. She took it up carelessly, and in surprise saw that it came from Morleyvale. The next moment she hurried from the room, for she had caught sight of the name signed at the end of the letter.

"Yours, as sincere as unhappy,
"GRAHAM WAVEBOURNE."

With a throb at her heart, pain and hope clashing together there, she sunk down in the retirement of her own chamber, and read with deep emotion:

"MORLEYVALE, NOV.

"MY DEAR MISS BRUCE:

"It is not possible that any words could explain to you a particle of what I have been suffering since the few and (to me) supremely happy days when I met you at Lady Lorton's. Since that time my whole life has been overturned, and all that once was mine is mine no longer!

"Name, fortune, a proud position in the world, all which I felt so eager to lay at your feet—once dared to hope that, with time, aided by the profound devotion I felt and shall ever feel for you, I might persuade you to accept—all this has been swept from me at a stroke, and I find myself a landless man, and one, without even a name.

"Do you ask how? Ah, if you are so good as to grant my petition that I may see you once more, then will I tell you all, but I cannot write the dreadful truth.

"I am asking much, perhaps, but it is a last prayer. Entreat your father and mother to pity me and to grant it, for I am about to sail to a distant land, there to work for my own bread, far from home and kindred, and all that once made up my life. When I see you (oh, Phyllis, let me call you by your sweet name this once!) I will ask you whether you will have my friend, my dog, Hector, for your own. I cannot take him with me. Shall he stay with you? I cannot bear to think of his being left so lonely, listening for the footsteps he will never hear again. Perhaps I presume too much. If so, forgive me! I shall wait your answer to the first part of this letter with intense anxiety.

"Yours, as sincere as unhappy,
"GRAHAM WAVEBOURNE."

All the blissful hopes which she had buried—all the control she had exercised to repress every outward sign of painful emotion, contended vividly in her soul. But hope and joy predominated; for did not his words show that he loved her, after all?—that but for some dark, unexplained sorrow he would have flown to tell her of his affection? Had he lost all, indeed? If so, then he should find now that he had at least that unselfish devotion he hungered for, but did not hope to find.

But this letter—this precious letter—must be answered, and without delay!

"Aren't you coming to breakfast, Phyllis, dear?" said her mother, knocking lightly at her door, with a misgiving at heart she would not allow to appear, for she had noted her child's quick change of countenance and sudden disappearance.

"Mother—dear mother!" cried Phyllis, running to her. They were but two words, but the tone in which they were uttered had a world of meaning, and the mother saw that the rosy coloring of hope lighted Phyllis's eyes, and tinted her fair cheek once more. When she said, "What is it, darling?"—but not as she had once before asked the question—the answer that Phyllis gave was to put Graham's letter into her mother's hand.

CHAPTER XI.

TOLD IN SADNESS.

A LITTLE later in the day, when Phyllis was composed (though her heart kept up a joyful music to the unspoken words, "He is coming!") a little later, then—when sundry explanations had been made, in disjointed fashion, to her father, and she had faltered out her petition to be allowed to have Hector—Phyllis sat down to reply to Graham's letter.

The autumn wind rushed through the topmost boughs of the pine-trees and the bare oak-boughs behind her father's house; but now to the fair girl's ear the rush of harsh sounds only seemed invigorating—the roar of the wind a grand music.

"DEAR LORD WAVEBOURNE (wrote Phyllis):

"We will all take care of Hector, if you must indeed leave him; and he shall be always with me. I will never part from him in any joy or sorrow that may come to me.

"My father and mother both desire me to say that they will be happy to welcome you here, and that they, as well as myself, are sincerely grieved for any trouble you are suffering. If you have indeed lost all those things which the world prizes so highly, you will find at least that true friends will know how to value you for yourself alone.

"Yours ever sincerely,

"PHYLLIS BRUCE."

She trembled as she wrote the words.

Were they too warm? But if he had lost all, then she might write so.

Hedged about with all sorts of prosperity, while he had stood so apart from her by reason of his greatness, she would have died rather than give voice to her love. But he had spoken now, and was in sorrow, in poverty; and his adversity gave her courage to hint at an affection which timidity would have caused her to conceal.

And then she waited.

That day which had brought her tidings of his love, went gently by, and another morning rose.

Phyllis went about her usual occupations, but listened for every footfall. Might he not be expected at any hour, after the permission granted him?

A glint of sunshine had chased the November mist partially away as Phyllis, early in the afternoon, went out into the garden. She needed solitude and the voice of Nature to soothe her after so much emotion.

At the end of the garden there was a moss-grown alley, over-arched by so many interlacing boughs, that even under July's sun the heat was not too much felt there; and in November's bareness it still was sheltered.

Hither came Phyllis, pacing up and down under the cold, colorless sky. Now and then a shaft of brightness pierced the gray, making a radiance where before was gloom.

"Oh, if my love could, like the sunlight here to-day, light up his darkened life, and irradiate it with something of joy!" thought Phyllis.

And as the words shot through her heart, he came.

Just at a turn in the path, she caught sight of him, and a rosy blush spread itself over her fair face; a tremor ran through her frame. Her fast beating heart told her at the same moment of his love, and the sharp pain of their approaching separation.

She gave but one glance, but that was enough to tell her how he had battled with the stern realities of life since the day they parted. Then he was gay, careless, with the world at his feet; and now—oh! what words could describe the change which had come over him?

But at this first moment of their meeting, joy completely distanced grief, and thrust the latter into the background. For an instant he could find no word at command as he hastened to her side. She, also, was speechless from deep emotion.

Then he spoke, holding fast her hands.

"Phyllis!" said he—"Phyllis, you will let me call you by that sweet name for these few moments? The trouble which has overwhelmed me and mine is so great that it renders me, as I have told you, a nameless man, with no wealth to claim. But yet I would not call myself conquered by Fortune—nay, I would count myself supremely blest, if, in the days to come, I might hope, when I have earned a new position for myself in a new land—if I might hope to win—" He broke off with a passionate gesture. "What right have I to tell you of the love I feel for you? None—none! No, no! I came to explain to you what had befallen us—to leave Hector in your care, since his master can no longer shelter, no longer have him for companion. May I tell you, then, what has—overturned my life?" he added, in faltering tones, as Phyllis looked the emotion and concern she felt.

"Yes, yes!" she whispered, while tenderness, pity and sweetness looked from her sparkling eyes.

And, in broken words, he told her what had come upon his father and upon them all.

"And now I have not even a name that I can call my own," said he, when he had ended

his sad recital. "No; not even a name! Did I not truly say just now that I had no right to tell you of the love I feel for you? And if I have breathed it, forgive me, Phyllis! For, if I have spoken of my affection, it was because it is so great that it refuses to be quite repressed in your sweet presence. You will forgive me then, will you not, for have I not assured you that I hope for nothing?"

She stood before him in her girlish loveliness on the mossy pathway, the bare branches swaying overhead, the pale gray sky peeping through. And as a rosy blush spread over her enchanting face, her sweet lips parted, and she breathed a few words, soft as the west wind of delicious spring.

"Oh," she said, "if you could but believe a little in my devotion, as well as in that of Hector!"

There was one moment's startled pause on his side, and then he cried out, "Phyllis! oh, how you make me hope every thing!" And then he caught her in his arms.

Sway on, leafless branches, against the cold, gray sky. What matters it to Graham and Phyllis, to-day, whether you are bare or covered with the loveliest of verdure? They two have entered into a paradise so enchanting that they are raised above all sublunary things just now—lifted into the warmth and splendor of the paradise we call Love.

So, in this moment, Graham forgets his sorrow, or remembers it only to tell himself, with joy, that Phyllis's affection is for him alone.

And Phyllis? Ah! she is wandering deep in the most glorious recesses of Love's bewitching pathways. It is joy to her that she can prove the disinterestedness of her affection; so, though feeling intensely for his sake the loss that he has suffered, she yet rejoices to show that now, stripped as he is of honors and dignities, it is he alone whom she loves.

You would have supposed, had you seen this young pair emerge from the moss-grown pathway, when at length, the falling day made them turn their steps to the house, that he and she were at the summit of good fortune, with no long vista of separation before them.

Colonel and Mrs. Bruce met them at the door, and the very aspect of the young couple told its story. It was fortunate for fair Phyllis that her good father valued her happiness more than he coveted riches for her; and he listened with kindest sympathy to Graham's broken tale, told in his small study, while Phyllis was weeping joyfully in her mother's arms in the room above.

By-and-by, the little party, at once happy and sad, gathered round the dinner-table. How many days must pass before those four would gather there again.

Phyllis had felt perfect joy when Graham told her of his love that day, and had believed it so strong that nothing could trouble it. But when she glanced at Graham's face, and heard the tone in which he spoke of all that lay before him; when she realized that for all he had to do and bear he had been wholly unprepared; when she saw him wince as the old servant addressed him as "My lord," then she fully recognized how hard a thing it was that her betrothed was called upon to suffer.

A few hours after, Phyllis was weeping his departure, with Hector lying at her feet; his great human, mournful eyes fixed on hers with the sympathy born of instinct.

CHAPTER XII.

AN OLD LETTER.

BUT it was not only in the heart of the fair Phyllis and of her lover, or of the faithful Hector, that there was anguish and woe. No; in the proud palatial mansion at Morleyvale there was silence instead of laughter, mourning instead of joy.

No gay voices sounded along the deserted corridors; the house was to be closed, as the family were to make a long stay abroad.

But first there were many things to arrange, and one thing in particular with which the unhappy Graham charged himself in order to spare his father. It had become imperative to

enlighten the Marchioness, as she must undergo the ceremony of a re-marriage; and when her son, in the tenderest way, faltered out that, on account of an unforeseen discovery, his father and the lawyers deemed it best that she should consent to her marriage ceremony being again performed in strict privacy, lest any technical point should be disputed after the Marquis's death, she fainted with the shock, and on regaining consciousness could only say, "But you, Graham—you and your sisters and brothers? If the first ceremony was illegal, how are you all to be secured in name and position?"

And she grew rapidly so ill that it was impossible to fix a day for that sad remarriage, the mere mention of which had half killed her.

Ah! the world was not to know what had happened to the proud De Vayles, but the possibility of hiding their grief for a time lessened it not in the least.

There was, too, one other person who keenly suffered from their misfortune, but who received no pity in his sorrow.

Poor Mr. Moss, now returned to his quiet parsonage, had grown thin and miserable with continual brooding on the wretchedness of which he had been the cause. What he had done he had accomplished in the spirit of a martyr, solely in obedience to the dictates of conscience. He had gained, as yet, only one part of the martyr's reward—intense suffering.

Lucy Fane was now able to walk about on crutches, and the unhappy clergyman, who had avoided paying her a visit since his return, determined to go and see her on the morrow, and give back the papers intrusted to him by her—the papers which had been the cause of so much misery.

"It shall be done immediately after breakfast. This weakness is unworthy," thought the clergyman, as he stood in his lonely study.

He went to his writing table and slowly unlocked a drawer, removing therefrom some packets neatly tied up, and the roll of old bills which he intended to restore next day to Lucy Fane's keeping. The bills alone were untidy, for he had not read over or assorted these, and mechanically set about doing so now.

"What could make people care to keep such useless things?" muttered he, spreading the papers before him.

As he did so, three or four letters, not folded, and rolled up cornerwise with the bills, displayed themselves. From a patient feeling of conscientiousness, as he had promised Lucy Fane to ascertain if any among the papers were worth keeping, the clergyman began his task of perusing these faded lines; and, as he did so, his own eyes grew bright with excitement, his forehead flushed, he clasped his hands, striving to still the tremor of hope which ran through him.

This was what he read with such keen interest:

"DEAR SISTER:

"Your letter giv me much trubbel. I doute we shall all git into trubbel fur what we dun. You say who is to know, but things do git fund out, an' I wish you never dun it. I know 'twas to save our good name; but yett I think it cud have bin managed another way.

"Oh! how I do wish you or James had writ to me before tellin' this to the neighbors. You say they can niver fund out, cos you and Jim have on'y bin six weeks in the place, so how be they to know the difference atween Mary an' Lucy? That's true; but then, though poor Mary herself is in her grave, and has bin there this five month an' more, so as she can't niver rise up an' say a word to the contrary, there's her fine husband, Mr. Graham Wavebourne, and you've told him as she was dead an' buried such time as she really did die.

"An' now you're wantin' to say as how poor Lucy, as has disgraced us all, an' expectin' a baby, is your daughter Mary, an' married, an' is Mrs. Wavebourne. Well, you're my own sister, an' I can't go from you in your trubbel, but what's to happen if so be as Mr. Wavebourne iver comes to see you again? You don't spose he will, but he might. Think o' that.

"This poor baby o' poor Lucy's 'ull have to grow up in Mr. Wavebourne's name. Oh! why iver did you an' Jim tell sich a tale to the neighbors? But it's done, so write soon to your trubbled sister,

"SARAH GREEN."

What—what Providence was this to make him also discover this explanation of a most miserable story! With trembling hands, and tears of thankfulness in his eyes, Mr. Moss took

up another letter of later date than the preceding one. It ran thus:

"DEAR SISTER:

"I'm truly sorry to hear of all your trubbel, an' that your misguided Lucy sleeps in peace, as well as the poor babe You grieve; but, dear sister, it is best so. There was the child, with no father to tak' care of it or its poor mother. An' if she'd got over her illness, an' had lived in the village, an' got work, an' gone by the name of Mrs. Wavebourne, maybe some day her sister's husband, Mr. Wavebourne, would ha' heerd tell of it. Well, pr'haps now as the Lord has removed the poor, misguided girl, your way was best, seein' poor Lucy hadn't nowheres to turn but to your house in her trubbel. An', as you say, it wouldn't ha' been pleasant for you nor Jim to liv' among neighbors who could cast it in your teeth that you'd had a child who'd disgraced you. But now they think as she was a lawful married woman, an' they can't say nothink agen her, poor girl! nor yet you.

"But why iver did ye go an' have that bit of a head-stone put up, with the name an' date on't? The neighbors were deceived enuff without that. Nobody can't find out now, if you hold your tongues. But you've done foolish to have that head-stone set up in the churchyard, main foolish, for by that it might be traced that the real Mary Wavebourne lies buried at Highgate. But, there, I won't say no more to add to your trubbel, nor yet Jim's; an' so I hope all ull go wel, an'

"I remane, your lovin' sister,

"SARAH GREEN."

There was yet another letter bearing on the same subject, in which the writer again said she was glad to hear that her sister and Jim were getting over their trouble, and that perhaps their way was best, after all; that she did not see how any thing could be found out, if Mary's husband had really gone abroad for good, as he had told them he should do.

As he read the last lines, Mr. Moss sprung to his feet, as if transformed into a new man, so much had hope gladdened him.

Lucy Fane was much astonished at receiving a visit from the clergyman so late at night, and also at his eager inquiry whether her aunt, Mrs. Green, was still living in London.

She was living, said Lucy; but had moved a little way out of London, to Wandsworth.

Mr. Moss wrote down the address of this woman, who had been cognizant of the deception of substituting one daughter for another; and after passing a night full of sleepless impatience, started by the earliest train for Morleyvale, carrying the precious letters with him.

CHAPTER XIII.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"MOTHER, dearest! for our sakes rouse yourself! My poor father is in despair!" pleaded Graham.

"I cannot rouse myself, Graham," feebly replied the Marchioness, "I would rather die than go through this marriage ceremony, which is to be an evidence that I have long been no wife! I cannot see your father again; he has killed me!"

This was the burden of all she said; and the household, aware that something of grave import had happened, but not in the least understanding what, sunk into vague alarm and ever-deepening melancholy.

Visitors called with inquiries after the Marchioness, but were not admitted. The Marquis sat solitary in his study, groaning out the miserable hours. Graham's sisters continually implored him to tell them what was the matter; and only his young brothers, who were at Eton, escaped the family gloom.

Upon Graham devolved all the arrangements for the approaching journey abroad, and there were many to make in the short space of time left to pass at Morleyvale, for the Marquis never intended to live there again. The place was to be let, in order to secure more means of saving out of his income, the only source by which he could provide for the children who, by right, could inherit nothing of his.

"We must get to London, anyhow, dear mother," said Graham, tenderly. "Time presses. I have to carve out a career for myself now."

"Well, my son, I will not hinder you. Whether I die in London, or abroad, or here, will not much matter."

Sadly the young man left her bedside, and descended that noble staircase which, after to-

morrow, he should never tread again as heir to Morleyvale. The home to which he had, for a few brief hours, hoped to transplant Phyllis was to be his no longer—had never been his!

Musing thus, he did not remark two figures watching him in the hall—those of a footman and Mr. Moss.

"If you please, my lord," began the servant, in a low tone, "this gentleman would insist on seeing your lordship."

Graham looked up, and a sudden unexpected thrill of hope shot through him as he caught sight of the clergyman's perturbed face.

"I must speak to you!" cried Mr. Moss, advancing.

"Come in here," said Graham, opening a door.

"Read these!" cried Mr. Moss, without sitting down, or making any further preface. "I have traveled without a moment's pause! Oh, surely these explain all! And they will set all right—as it was before!"

It was Graham's hand, usually so steady in its strength of youth, which trembled now, as he eagerly read the old forgotten letters, penned so many years ago, and Graham's dark eyes which were suffused with tears.

For he saw his mother restored to happiness, his old name given back to him, his father saved from ceaseless misery; and, beyond, the sweet and gracious figure of Phyllis passing in and out among them all, his best-beloved, his bride, received at Morleyvale as a daughter.

"Come to my father!" broke from his lips.

The clergyman followed into that same lofty apartment where the Marquis and his son had first learned the bitter tidings which had bereft them of all peace.

There sat the Marquis—hopeless, his dull eye fixed on vacancy. He did not even look up as the door opened.

"Father!" cried Graham.

And then, with a start, the nobleman raised his head, and sprung excitedly to his feet as he recognized Mr. Moss.

"What! again?" cried he. "What further news do you bring to crush me? Why are you here?"

"To save us, father!" exclaimed Graham.

"I bring you hope—certainly, as I believe!" gasped the clergyman.

"Read these, dear father!"

What did his son mean by speaking in these joyful tones?

And Graham calmed his agitated father, who in a few minutes was enabled to realize the change in their position—that all was as if that frightful cloud which had hung over them had never threatened them with its deluge.

"Now I can ask your mother to pardon me!" cried the Marquis, softened to the core; "and, Graham, she must not refuse her forgiveness! Nor shall I forget what a noble fellow my son has shown himself in our terrible calamity!"

The words carried infinite joy to Graham's heart, for did they not point to his speedy happiness with Phyllis?

There was a touching interview a few moments later between the Marquis and Marchioness; and Graham had the great pleasure of going to tell his sisters, from their mother, that she felt so much better that she should certainly join them at dinner that evening, as she was about to rise.

Mr. Moss was all this time waiting below in the library; but he waited patiently enough.

To tell the truth, his very existence had been forgotten in the restored family joy.

It was Graham who remembered the poor gentleman, and who went hastily to offer his own and his father's apologies. As he was speaking, the Marquis re-entered, and the clergyman rose, prepared to take leave.

"I don't know why it was permitted that I, a stranger, should have caused your lordship's family such distress. We cannot see the reason why we are allowed to make mistakes sometimes; and, in this instance, I confess that my discovery has, apparently, been only productive of a barren pain. But, if we could behold all—"

The Marquis interrupted him with a smile.

"Mr. Moss, I must usurp your office for a moment, and console you by showing you that, in one instance, your discovery has conferred immense happiness. My dear boy here loves a young lady without rank or fortune, and though a lady by position, I should never have consented to his marriage with her had not all this happened to open my eyes and soften my heart. You will have made two people happy for life; and I can only trust that this knowledge will be some reward for what, I see now, has caused you immense pain. You must promise to come to my son's wedding. We could not have you absent at such a time."

"Dear father, how good you are!" faltered Graham, too profoundly happy at that instant to say more.

Mr. Moss was replying, in a voice full of emotion, to the Marquis's kind speech, when Graham found voice.

"Mr. Moss, I, too, have something to tell you. Unconsciously you have given me, in the trouble through which we have had to pass, a very precious joy. Rank and title carry such weight with them, that I have dreaded that whoever became my wife would be chiefly influenced, in accepting me, by the consideration of what I possessed; and it was always a bitter thought. But Phyllis Bruce has accepted me believing I am without a name, without wealth, that I have a stigma on my birth. It will be a constant delight to me to remember this, and will make all we shall enjoy together a purer happiness."

"I am rewarded, indeed!" said the clergyman, in a husky voice. "My lord, you send me away a happy man!"

"We cannot let you leave us yet. Stay with us to-day. You have to make my wife's acquaintance, and to be introduced to my daughters," said the Marquis, cordially.

But Graham did not linger at Morleyvale with Mr. Moss that day.

How could he leave Phyllis one hour longer than was necessary in the belief that he was not legally Graham Wavebourne? And how could letter or telegram convey the joyful news?

So he started off for Colonel Bruce's as fast as two spirited horses could carry him to the station.

And as he shook the reins, and spoke to the creatures, saying, "Step out, Redwing! Go as fast as you like, Beauty!" the very groom behind felt certain that the trouble, whatever it had been which had so depressed his lordship, had ceased to exist, and that all was well with his master.

And so it came to be believed among the servants at Morleyvale that his lordship's love affairs had been at first crossed by the Marquis, who had now consented to make his son happy.

Fair Phyllis was sitting that evening in her father's study, alone—alone with the firelight and Hector, as her father and mother were dining out, and she herself was not in a mood to go into society. To-night her heart was continually with Graham, and the peculiar sadness of his position weighed on her sorely. "Nothing, not even my love, can remove the pain of knowing that he has no name, no position, he who was born and has been reared in grandeur," thought the sweet girl. "Oh, Hector! you and I will do all we can to make him forget every thing but our love."

And, sinking on her knees, she threw her arms round the dog's neck, and imprinted a kiss on his head. Nor was Hector unresponsive. He testified in the strongest manner his sympathy and acquiescence in her feelings, regarding her with the utmost affection out of his brown, intelligent eyes.

But suddenly he broke from her caress, and with wildest demonstrations of delight rushed toward the door. A bell had rung a few minutes previously, but Phyllis had not been attentive to trivial outside matters.

"What is it, Hector?" said Phyllis, while a thrill of expectation, of wild, sweet hope, trembled in her pulses. She had but lately

bid Graham a long adieu; and it had been settled that when they met again it should be when he came to claim her for his bride; but even in that blissful looking forward there had been pain, for then he would bear her to a distant land, to live far from her father and mother, and the rest of her loved ones. And, after all, had he returned to say some forgotten word? What else could make the dog behave like this?

She had not time to reach the study door, ere it was thrown open—there was a frantic rush on the part of Hector, and Graham himself stood before her, but in his eyes and on his face an expression of rapturous happiness.

"Martha," said Phyllis, about an hour afterward, to the old housekeeper, who had been in Colonel Bruce's service as long as Phyllis could remember—"Martha, I know that my father and mother will wish Lord Wavebourne to stay here to-night; I am sure they will ask him to do so when they return."

"Well, Miss Phyllis, I hope they will," said Martha, with a smile full of meaning.

"And I imagine that he has not had any dinner, Martha," continued Phyllis, with a blush.

"Then I'll do my best to get some for his lordship. I'll put down the fowl this minute. Dear heart! of course he'll want some dinner, and a bed, too. D'ye think, now, he'll ever be coming here again, Miss Phyllis?"

"Oh, Martha! I am so happy!" was all that Phyllis answered, shyly and sweetly.

"Eh? Then I was right!" cried Martha, in triumph. "I said as how a great lord such as he wouldn't come here unless it was after a beautiful young lady like you."

"But, oh, Martha, you must not call him a great lord in that tone, for, indeed, he is so very, very unlike a great lord—"

"La! my dear Miss Phyllis!" interrupted Martha, "d'ye think I haven't got two eyes in my head? I can see he's nice, without any telling! Besides, he's had the wit to choose you, and, great lord as he is, a happy man he is to have won you, Miss Phyllis! And I'll see his room got ready, and dinner, too. Oh, we shall have a rare wedding; the whole county will be talking of it!"

And Phyllis and Graham were entirely happy. They were busy days for Martha which followed, for the Marquis and Marchioness arrived at Colonel Bruce's to make acquaintance of their new daughter-elect, and Graham remained nearly a week on a visit.

Then Phyllis was carried off to Morleyvale to be introduced to every one there, and after that came the preparations for the wedding.

It was in the very first days of the New Year that Phyllis and Graham were married. Local newspapers recorded, among the incidents of the wedding day, that a large brown dog followed the noble bridegroom to church, and could with difficulty be restrained from taking up a position at his side before the altar; and that when the fair bride issued from the church portals, leaning on her husband's arm, the animal followed close at their heels, sprung into the carriage with the happy pair, and was not repulsed.

The young and supremely happy couple passed the first week of their honeymoon at Lady Lorton's country seat, which she had placed at their disposal, and then went to Algeria for the rest of the winter, returning to England when the primroses were beginning to unfold.

The Marquis and Marchioness, more united than ever, are daily more charmed with their fair daughter-in-law, and are always full of interest and pleasure when she comes to pay them a visit at Morleyvale.

Lord and Lady Wavebourne are settled at a place midway between Colonel Bruce's and Morleyvale, so that fair Phyllis is often at her old home, and her father and mother are as often at her new one.

Hector oscillates between the two; but his headquarters are at Graham's.

THE END.

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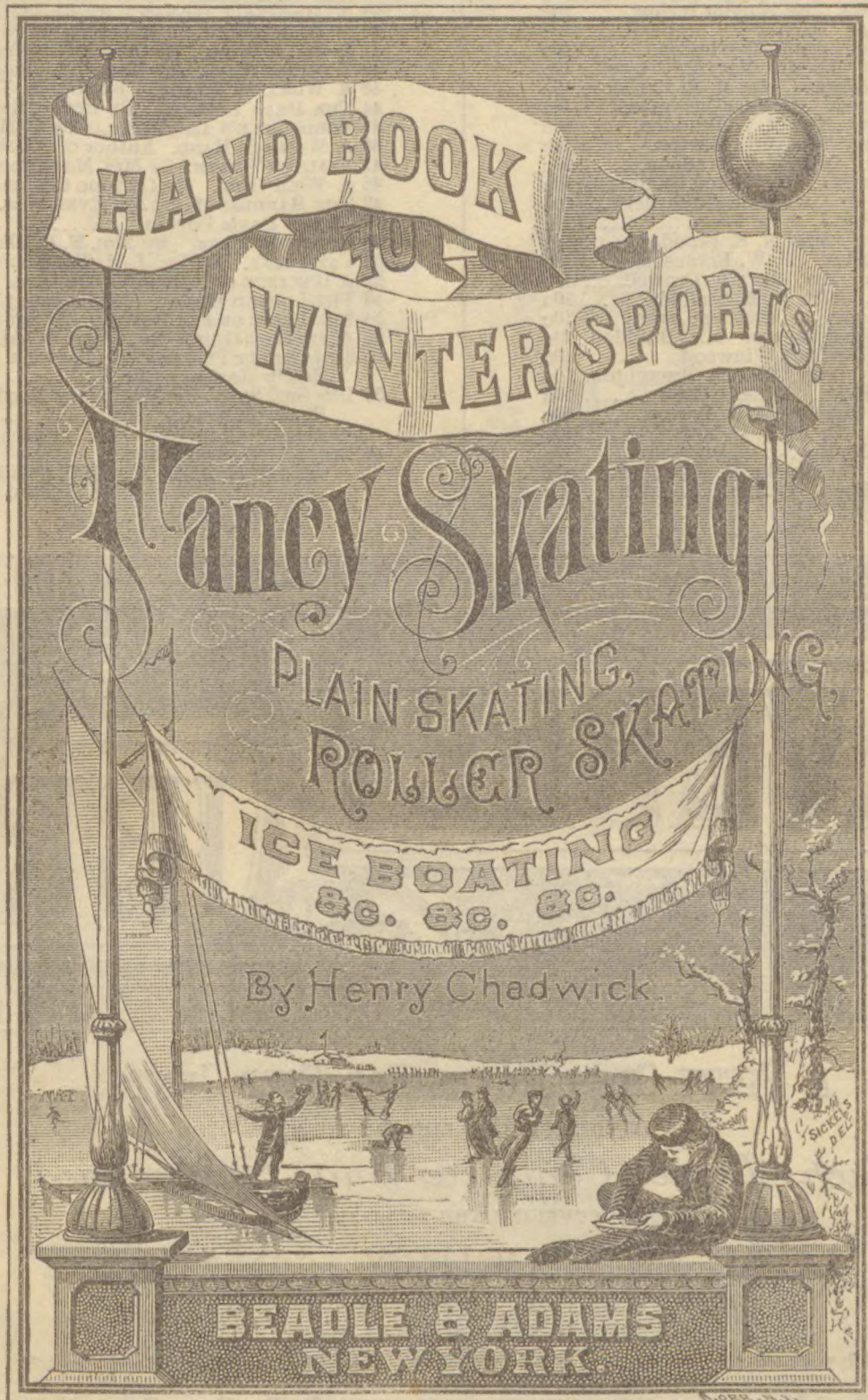
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